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Interview with
Griff L. Douglas
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Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
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(Signature)
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Oral History Collection

Griff Douglas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Griff Douglas for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on April 18, 1978 in Fort Worth, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Douglas 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. Douglas had been aboard the cruiser USS Houston when it was sunk off the Java coast in the early days of the war and subsequently spent the rest of World War II in various Japanese prisoner-of-war camps.

Now Mr. Douglas, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature.

Mr. Douglas: Okay. I was born in Waco, Texas, and lived in several towns around Texas. My mother and father were cotton millers.

Dr. Marcello: When were you born?

Douglas: June 16, 1923.

Marcello: And did you say your folks were cotton millers?

Douglas: Right. Textile workers.

Marcello: I see.

Douglas: I moved to Bonham, Texas, when I was about eight, and that's what I call home. I went to school there, and I quit in the ninth grade, and not too long after that I joined the Navy when I was seventeen.

Marcello: When was it that you joined the Navy?

Douglas: December 3, 1940.

Marcello: Did economic reasons play any part in your decision to join the service at that time?

Douglas: No. To get out of the cotton mill . . . textiles. All my people had been textile workers, and I didn't like it. I was working in the mill.

Marcello: But you could find work at that time yet.

Douglas: I was working. We had moved from Bonham to Tulsa . . . Sand Springs, a suburb of Tulsa, and I was working there. I knew that I was going to get out of textile work some way. (Chuckle) I sure didn't like it.

Marcello: Why did you select the Navy as opposed to one of the other branches?

Douglas: Well, in the summer of 1940, I was in the national guard. I lied about my age--told them I was eighteen--to get in

two or three months before they made the 1940 maneuvers in Louisiana. I went on those maneuvers. I was the lowest ranking guy in Louisiana apparently, because they had me on all the details, and it rained and was muddy. When I got back--we knew they was going to mobilize before we got back from the maneuvers--so I went up and told the captain that I'd lied and I was seventeen and I wanted out, so he let me out. I had a cousin in the Navy who's now retired . had pulled a hitch in the Navy and was out at the time. I wanted in and I thought I would like it, and I did.

Marcello: I think it's rather ironic. In other words, you had originally been a part of that Texas National Guard and had gotten out of it to join the Navy.

Douglas: Right.

Marcello: And ultimately, of course, you ended up with them again in prison camps.

Douglas: That's correct. I was in the 132nd Field Artillery, and they were the 131st Field Artillery in the 36th Division. I didn't know anyone, and when they joined us in Batavia--of course, I'm getting ahead of my story here--boy, I looked at everybody's face looking for someone from home. I only had a pair of shorts on, and, of course, they was very generous with their clothing anyway, but I was really

looking for someone from home. There was no one I knew.

Marcello: Okay, why don't you describe the manner in which you eventually got aboard the USS Houston.

Douglas: Well, I went through boot camp in San Diego and went through Hospital Corps School in Balboa Navy Hospital and then was stationed at the hospital until October of '41. Then I was ordered to the Asiatic Station.

Marcello: Was this voluntary duty?

Douglas: No (chuckle). I had put in for dental school, and I was on leave. I was home on leave four days out of my twenty-day leave--the only leave I'd had. They sent me a telegram, "Report back," and I thought it was dental school . . . the nine-month dental school in Washington, D.C., that I'd wanted. I got back and it was the Asiatic Station. I might have not been so quick to get back; I just rushed back (chuckle). But anyway, I was transferred to the Asiatic Station, and I went to San Francisco to Goat Island Receiving Station and stayed there until we left November 13th. I made my last liberty on Armistice Day, I remember that.

Marcello: You mentioned that you went to the receiving station there in San Francisco. What was the name of it?

Douglas: Goat Island. Treasure Island runs off of Goat Island.

Marcello: I see.

Douglas: Treasure Island, at the time, was a seaplane base. The

Navy didn't have it. Most people refer to it as Treasure Island now, but it wasn't a Navy base at that time.

Marcello: How closely were you keeping abreast with world affairs and current events at that time?

Douglas: Fairly close because I can recall wondering what in the world was going to happen and all this. Hitler was eating the world up and this. I was interested but not as interested as I was after I got into it. I think that's true with anyone; they don't realize what it's about until they get into it.

Marcello: When you thought about the possibility of the country getting in war, is it safe to say, without putting words in your mouth, that your eyes were turned more toward Europe than they were toward the Far East and Japan?

Douglas: Yes. It looked . . . yes, I guess that would be true saying that. Do you mean us getting in war with them?

Marcello: Us getting in war period--when you thought of the country getting into the war.

Douglas: Yes, I thought it would be in the European theatre. In fact, I hitchiked home in October of '41, and I caught a ride with a bus driver from Yuma to Phoenix. Empty bus . he was the mechanic taking the bus back over there. I had a fifth of whiskey in my grip, so we drank that fifth of whiskey driving that bus. I often thought about it. We would say, "Those Japs, we'll whip them in two weeks if

they get on us! We know they don't have enough nerve to jump on us! We'll whip them in two weeks!" I often thought how crazy that was (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, so you're in San Francisco at Goat Island, and you're awaiting transportation to go to the Asiatic Station. Pick up the story at that point.

Douglas: Right. Okay, I got there, and there was too many pharmacist's mates or corpsmen to work in the sickbay. I worked in the liberty yeoman's office and really had a good time. I had a friend; he was raised there, and his daddy was a police sergeant. He had his car every night, and we'd meet a lot of girls. So I really had a good time there awaiting.

I had tonsillitis and could have missed the draft. The doctor wanted to let my tonsils get well . take my tonsils out. He had took a liking to me, and he said, "I'll get you assigned right here." But I wanted to go with my buddies, you know--one more mistake I made (chuckle).

But anyway, from there we went aboard the Chaumont. We was, I think, six days from there to Pearl, and we was in Pearl about ten days. I think we left Pearl on either the 1st or the 2nd of December. I was glad to leave there; there was too many sailors. I made liberty several times, but, golly, you had to line up to eat, drink, catch

a bus, catch a cab, or whatever. A lot of them was lined up at those houses, too (chuckle). I wasn't there long enough for that; I probably would have if I'd stayed longer.

Marcello: Did you notice any tension in the air while you were at Pearl? That is, did there seem to be some kind of a wartime footing or state of emergency?

Douglas: Yes, there was, and I thought it was kind of silly at the time. They had a twelve o'clock curfew unless you was married--a few sailors were married--and they wouldn't let Japanese cab drivers inside Pearl. The only place you could catch a cab was at the YMCA or a bus, and they could go inside. It was nine miles from the gate to the ship. So if you caught a cab with one of those Jap cab drivers, they had to let you out at the gate; they wasn't allowed in. So there was that kind of security, and I didn't . oh, I didn't worry about it one way or the other, really, at that time.

Oh, I can remember them having two ships in San Francisco Bay all the time I'm there with a Coast Guard cutter, a couple of them, setting around--Japanese ships--with lights on detaining them. Now I don't know if they got out of there . whether they were still there when we left or not. But really, I wasn't worried about it one way or the other at the time.

Marcello: Okay, so you say about December 1st or 2nd, the Chaumont left Pearl Harbor.

Douglas: Right.

Marcello: And you were on your way to Manila?

Douglas: Right. My next assignment was Cañacao Navy Hospital at Cavite Navy Yard. It's a Naval hospital at Cavite Naval Yard; it was called Cañacao, like Balboa was in San Diego. We formed a convoy, which I later found out that this 131st group were in the same convoy, and the Pensacola was convoying us.

Marcello: So it was the Chaumont, the Pensacola, the Republic, and then there was a little corvette or something.

Douglas: It wasn't a corvette; it was a yacht that, as we was told, some millionaire had leased to the government. It was a pretty good-sized yacht, although it bounced around pretty good in that rough water.

Marcello: So it was about a four-boat convoy.

Douglas: No, it was nine ships in the convoy, plus the Pensacola made ten. Now some of them was just . . . one was hauling lumber. I think everything going past Pearl at that time was advised to go in convoy. I don't know whether it was mandatory or not. I think they'd been going in convoy since '40; it was my understanding it was sometime in '40.

But anyway, we're out in the morning that they're

bombing Pearl. I'm mess cooking. In fact, all the mess cooks were corpsmen; somebody didn't corpsmen on the ship, and they worked our fanny off. But anyway, they sounded general quarters, and my general quarters station was at sickbay, of course.

Marcello: What was your reaction when you heard about the Japanese attack at Pearl?

Douglas: Well, it was just . . . it didn't . . . well, we thought it was bad, but it really didn't . . . oh, I really didn't put that much importance to it at the time. I don't think I did any of it, really, until the first shot I saw fired.

Marcello: How did you get the news of the attack?

Douglas: They called us to general quarters and said, "They're in the process of bombing Pearl right now." And we're not far out. We can't be far, because the slowest ship, I think, was about six knots, and the convoy had to go by that. We immediately put zig-zag procedures in, and the Pensacola convoyed funny. She'd be clean out of sight in the mornings when you'd make up a lot of times. Here she'd come steaming over the horizon. Well, I went aboard a heavy cruiser just like her, and we didn't convoy like that. We led the convoy or maybe circled it, but we never went out of sight. So I never did understand that. I thought they was all taught the same way how to convoy, but she convoyed different than

we did.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese at that stage, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind?

Douglas: Well, I don't know whether I could answer that; I don't really know. Just an Oriental. I'd never met one.

Marcello: In other words, it's safe to say you really hadn't given them too much thought one way or the other?

Douglas: Not really. We was of the opinion, when they bombed well, the same thing as that bus driver and I--"Well, it won't take us long to wipe these guys out . . . to take care of this." Which just not knowing, it's just dumb, really. I think I wasn't the only one; a lot of them felt the same way.

Marcello: Okay, so you proceeded on this zig-zag course, and ultimately they diverted you from Manila, and you were on your way some other place.

Douglas: I think we immediately turned south, and then, of course, we continued the zig-zagging. We went to Formosa and circled; the convoy went around Formosa. Occasionally, you could see land; most of the time, you couldn't. But I understand that we was close to Formosa. They was waiting, as I understand, to see whether they could get into Manila or not. Apparently, they just figured out they couldn't,

which they couldn't at that time, I don't guess.

Marcello: Now by this time had you lost the Republic and some of those other ships?

Douglas: No, no.

Marcello: They're still with you.

Douglas: We're all in convoy, yes, until we stop at Suva in the Fijis, and we stay one night. Now we might have lost a ship or so there, but I think the ones with troops on all left . we stayed one night and then left the next morning. Our next stop was Brisbane, Australia. I'm not sure whether all of them was still in the convoy or not, but I'm pretty sure all the troops was, because this 131st bunch hit there the same time I did.

Marcello: How long did you stay at Brisbane?

Douglas: When we left there, we didn't leave there together. Because we left there, and the Pensacola took us to--I believe it was just us--through the Great Barrier Reef, and we was inside, and the Pensacola took us to I believe that's called Thursday Island. Is that correct? I'm not sure about that; I believe it is. That's the first time I saw the Houston, and she was waiting there to pick us up.

Marcello: That was a pretty ship, was it not?

Douglas: Beautiful ship. The Houston?

Marcello: Yes.

Douglas: Yes. The Pensacola, too. They're both beautiful ships. Yes, the Houston, as I understand, was the largest cruiser in the Navy . largest heavy cruiser in the Navy. Well, anyway, she's stopped and anchored in this bay-type or cove-type of deal. She took us, and the Pensacola, I guess, headed on back to Brisbane or wherever. I never seen or heard of her again.

Marcello: Why was it that you were transferred from the Chaumont over to the Houston?

Douglas: I don't know.

Marcello: Was it just that they had a need for pharmacist's mates or something of that nature?

Douglas: Well, they had a peacetime complement of pharmacist's mates and other crew on there. So there was ten of us that went aboard--a chief and a 2nd class, 3rd class let's see . anyway, there's five of us corpsmen. Anyway, there's ten of us medical personnel that went aboard. Anyway, they had to beef up . . . had to get a wartime complement of all rates on there, I imagine. I'm sure of that. There was a whole bunch of us went aboard--seamen and machinist's mates and boatswain's mates and whatever. We had (chuckle), it seemed to me like, too many people. It was seventeen enlisted personnel in sickbay. There wasn't much need for us until we got hit, and then you could see the need then.

In fact, those guys kind of looked down on us because we wasn't pulling those watches like they was, and they couldn't see any need for us until we got hit with a bomb. From that time on, they treated us a little bit different.

Marcello: Okay, now what happens, then, after you get aboard the Houston? Describe the activities of the Houston.

Douglas: Okay, we go aboard one night; I guess it was about midnight. Then she had not seen a shot fired at that time. She had brought a convoy or so down from the southern Philippines. We immediately took off for up around Java--Tjilatjap and Surabaya--and were working with the Dutch fleet up there. We was back in Darwin several times.

Marcello: During this period, you really didn't have any contact with the Japanese?

Douglas: Well, I go aboard January 6th, and the first contact we had with them was February 4th when they hit us with a bomb.

Marcello: Describe this initial contact with the Japanese.

Douglas: Well, the day before we're in a low cove off from Surabaya, and they was forming to hit Macassar Straits. We saw them bomb . . . they bombed Surabaya. We could see the planes, but they never made a run on us.

Marcello: Now were you part of a multinational force? Were you here with the Australian and the Dutch cruisers?

Douglas: That's right--Australian and Dutch ships. The next day . . . that night, I guess it was, or early in the morning, we took off in a convoy of several cruisers and several destroyers. I really don't know how many was in that group offhand. I understand we was going to the Macassar Straits to hit a convoy, and here come eighty or ninety Mitsubishi two-engine bombers. They hit us with a bomb, and they hit the Marblehead with two. I was looking at the Marblehead when she took hers. We took ours about the same time.

Marcello: Describe what it was like to come under that bombing attack.

Douglas: Well, I tell you, that's the first time, and like I said awhile ago, it don't really dawn on you, until you are actually shot at, as to what the hell's going on. I'm standing out on . . . they're making their first run; my GQ station was topside in the port hangar at a big aid box . . . me and a chief and a second class. The chief got killed; the second class is still alive. He lives in Massachusetts today.

Marcello: Your battle station was at a first aid box?

Douglas: It was a huge thing, and we also had a first aid satchel deal to carry. We was to work from there out, wherever anybody was wounded. So anyway, I'm standing at the lifeline watching them come in, and our guns are really firing--our 5-inch. That's the first time it dawned on

me. I thought at first, "Well, they'll knock all those planes down," you know, because, boy, they was putting them bursts right there. But they was so high that they couldn't. They knocked two or three down. That's when I first got scared right there--to think that they couldn't . here it comes, you know. So I ducked back in by the aid box and was squatted by the galley door when the bomb hit us. It knocked me down . or it kind of just picked me up and flew . . . I was already squatted. It just kind of threw me down.

Marcello: It was mainly the concussion from this bomb that affected you.

Douglas: Right. But the shrapnel had ate the deck up right in front of me and hit right over my head and went into a box right next to my shoulder and didn't come through. I didn't get a scratch.

Marcello: But it did kill some of these other people around you.

Douglas: Around me. There was a boy no farther than six or eight feet that I took my bandage scissors and finished cutting his leg off. It was blown off . just a piece of skin. I threw it over the side, and he died. He was laying there conscious, and he was hit all over. I stopped the bleeding and put tourniquets on and gave him a shot of morphine. He said, "Doc, that hurts!" (Chuckle) He's got holes all in

him, and he's burnt some, too, because the flash from that bomb burnt those guys. I'm not sure how many was killed, but I'm going to say somewhere around sixty to eighty in that bracket, and about that many were wounded.

Marcello: Did it do serious damage to the Houston itself?

Douglas: Yes, it knocked the after three 8-inch guns out. The bomb hit right beside the turret; the turret was trained out. If she'd been trained like she'd normally ride facing aft, it would have hit her. But she was trained out, and it hit right beside and went half-way through the deck. It killed a lot of people below decks, and it killed a lot of people on top and killed nearly everybody in that turret. I don't know, there was thirty or forty in the turret, and there was one or two who survived that. But it really tore up the ass end of the ship. Nearly all of the wounded came through our station, and that's my first indoctrination into a bunch of guys being hurt at the same time.

Marcello: What sort of an effect did this have upon you?

Douglas: Well, I'm just eighteen years old, you know, and I just didn't know. I'd often worried and wondered; that was the main thing that worried me, whether I'd be capable of doing my job or not. I knew I'd been trained well, but it worried me all the time. I thought, "Well, I know I'm scared," and I'd think, "Well, maybe I can't do my job." But after that, I

never worried about it anymore. I was still scared.

So I class two types of being scared--scared and doing your job and scared past doing your job, which I saw guys that was. They just, you know, lose their mind. I don't think that too many of them can help it. Some guys can get hold of theirselves and help that.

But anyway, it's a very frightening thing, and here these guys are tore all to pieces and burnt. But you're so busy, for one dern thing, that you didn't have time to . the aftershock the next day, I think, was worse than right then.

Marcello: In other words, while all the activity was going on, to use the cliché, you're almost too busy to be scared.

Douglas: Yes, you're just so busy. We shuffled all the wounded down to the sickbay. In fact, the "exec," Commander Robinson, who was killed the night we sunk, he secured the after control where his GQ station was and come down there. Heck, I had him carrying stretchers and everything else-- and him a full commander (chuckle).

Marcello: Is the ship still under full power and so on and so forth?

Douglas: Oh, yes.

Marcello: The engines and rudders and so on had not been affected.

Douglas: No, it hadn't been hurt.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens at this point? You sustain this

rather serious bomb damage.

Douglas: Well, of course, they put her at flank speed, I guess, because he was really taking off. We went down to . . . we was in the Java Sea at that time, and we went through the Bali Straits and to Tjilatjap. We was a day-and-a-half or two days getting into there.

We had so many wounded that we took over the admiral's cabin. The sickbay was full, and the compartment next to it was full. Several of us went up to the admiral's cabin, which I did, and were working on wounded up there. We did what we could do for them until we got there, and they took them off at Tjilatjap and sent them to a hospital, and Dr. Wassal was there. He had some of our wounded and the Marblehead's wounded. But anyway, they took our wounded off there. We got in one afternoon, and they took them off about somewhere around midnight that night.

In fact, I went in and this admiral's cabin had a bedroom and a regular bathroom, just like you've got in a house, and a living area-dining area beautiful thing. President Roosevelt had used it when he was aboard. I tell guys I slept in the same bed that President Roosevelt did. Because I went in and laid down on that big bed beside one patient in there and told the guys--we was waiting for the train to back up there and take the wounded--to wake me

up when they start to take them off and I'd help out. I woke up the next morning, and they'd taken all the wounded off, and there I am in the admiral's cabin and the only one in there.

That kind of scared me, and I started to buzz out of there. The double doors going into Captain Rooks's quarters, which was identical to those he was sitting at his desk. I'd never spoke to him; I just seen him. He hollered at me. I'll never forget, it scared the pee out of me. He was quite a man; he was well thought of. Well, he got the Medal of Honor from the sinking.

Marcello: Okay, so how long were you in Tjilatjap before you left?

Douglas: That time?

Marcello: Yes.

Douglas: We was back in there some more. Oh, I'd say about two or three days.

Marcello: When did you see your next action?

Douglas: Well, I'm not sure. We was bombed I don't know how many times before we were sunk. Now we went down to Australia-- I don't know if this is when we left Tjilatjap or not--but we went back to Darwin and picked up a convoy to take to Timor--four ships. The Japs landed on Timor before we could get them there. These was Americans . and I don't know . . . I think there was some Australians in it, too.

The skipper liked to have turned the Houston over protecting those four ships. In fact, he dipped the quarterdeck; water came up where I was that deep (gesture). But we turned around and went back to Darwin. But they had a near-miss, and a merchant sailor got hit right in here (gesture); it knocked a hole as big as your fist in here.

Marcello: He got hit in the small of the back?

Douglas: He got hit in the small of the back. So this is something else I've never understood. They stopped all five ships right out in the Indian Ocean, put me with my first aid bag and a whaleboat crew by crane, set us off in that ocean. We went over there and got him and brought him back--they didn't have a doctor aboard--brought him back aboard the Houston, and he died on the operating table. But there's five ships setting dead in the water, and I don't think that was . I mean, I wouldn't fault Captain Rooks; there's no way in the world I'd do that because he was a fine man.

Marcello: By this time are you becoming battle-hardened more or less?

Douglas: Yes. I don't think I'd ever got used to it. We'd only been hit the one time, but we're being bombed every day. You was pretty well bomb-happy. You know, it didn't take much to your nerves was on edge; you couldn't sleep

good. You know, you was just about half asleep, because we was in it at night and day, and we'd go out with the Dutch . we went back up to Surabaya and worked out of there with the Dutch fleet. We was off of . . . we couldn't get to Timor, so we went back to Darwin. We went in in front of the ships, and as I remember it, some destroyers came out and protected those ships. We went in and fueled and took off about dark, going south.

Marcello: Do you know what your purpose is all this time? Now obviously, there's no way that what ships you have are capable of standing up against the Japanese Navy.

Douglas: All I knew is that we was outnumbered; and they had planes and we didn't; and that it was just a bad situation. I've never understood why we wasn't pulled out. But it was for delaying, I understand now; I didn't know then. I knew we was damaged heavy as hell, but the Pensacola wasn't damaged, and she was around there somewhere. She should have relieved us or helped us or some such thing, I always figured.

Marcello: When you say "delaying," are you referring to perhaps a delaying action of the type that would prevent the Japanese from moving from the East Indies over to Australia?

Douglas: I think that was the purpose, as I understand it now; I didn't know what it was then. I knew we was just in a

bunch of crap that it looked like we was losing all the time.

Marcello: In other words, nobody really ever told you what you were doing out there.

Douglas: No, no. We were just there and hoping we'd get out.

Marcello: Describe the actual sinking of the Houston. Describe how it took place as you can recall it.

Douglas: Well, you know, we was in the Java Sea battle the day before. Well, it just . . . I'd look on one side of the ship, and it'd be torpedoes coming at us; I'd run over to the next side of the ship, and they'd be coming at us. You could see the flashes on the horizon; that was the Jap ships shooting. It looked like just match stems to me out there--their main masts.

When the main battery opened up, we was in air defense. Some of their planes had been spotted. It shook the ship just like that bomb had shook it. I'd never been aboard when the main battery had fired. I run out on the quarter-deck, and there was a chief standing there. I said, "Chief, we've been hit somewhere!" He said, "Kid, that's the main battery firing," and kind of made fun of me (chuckle). It shook the ship, and then, of course, they were just firing as fast as they could.

Marcello: Now you're referring to this battle that took place the day

before, the Battle of the Java Sea.

Douglas: The day before, yes, leading up to the next night.

Marcello: By this time you realize the Japanese are nothing to be taken lightly. That's a pretty good navy out there.

Douglas: Oh, I'd already figured that out some time before, yes. Their navy and their air force, too.

Well, we went all night, and, of course, they put star shells over us. He was going at flank speed.

Marcello: Now how badly were you damaged during the Battle of the Java Sea?

Douglas: We got two shell hits. One lodged in the water tanks, as I understand--it hit aft. One went through the forecastle and went straight--I went up the next morning and looked at it--went straight down through "officers' country" and outside the ship; it didn't go off. The one in the water tanks didn't go off, either. But I guess they sunk everything else out there. The Exeter got it; the DeRuyter got it; the Java got it. There was one or two of those destroyers that got away; now I don't know which ones got away. But we had some old four-piper destroyers with us, and I saw a British destroyer get blowed in half. I saw him blow a submarine out of the water, and it broke in half; it was right off our fantail. He took a torpedo that would have hit us, because he was right over here (gesture), and we

was like this.

Marcello: This was the British destroyer?

Douglas: The British destroyer. He just got the sub and whipped over here, and he took one--at least one--or maybe three torpedoes. It blowed him in half.

Marcello: I would imagine everything was going by fast and furious during the Battle of the Java Sea.

Douglas: Smokescreens were everywhere. In fact, we circled and made smoke around him.

Marcello: There's probably a great deal of mass confusion on both sides.

Douglas: I'd think so, yes. As I understand it, at the beginning of the battle, us and the Exeter had the 8-inch guns, and we was knocking fire from them. The Dutch admiral on a 6-inch cruiser, his guns wouldn't reach them, and he pulled all five of the cruisers in. He, I think, should have left us back. We're doing damage, and their guns were not reaching us. But anyway, we pulled in line, and that's when the Exeter got it, and we took the two hits. Anyway, that was all broke up into . we run all night with the Perth; she was leading us.

The next morning, I'm looking over the side, and we're still at general quarters. Some chief was looking over there, and I said, "Water looks funny to me!" He said,

"We're in shallow water." I could see the skipper up on the bridge looking over the side of the ship, and I'd look. He said, "We're in shallow water." I asked him what was wrong with the skipper, and he said, "Well, we're in shallow water. That's the reason he's so worried." We was going at flank speed, I guess.

So anyway, we pulled into Batavia and stayed all day. I'm sitting down at the end of the dock before dark, and Lieutenant Winslow, who wrote the book, Ghost of the Java Coast, he's out in one of our planes. Me and another guy were sitting down at the end of the dock watching him come in; he's just fixing to land. The Perth opened up on him, and a Dutch destroyer opened up on him; they thought he was a Jap. The Jap Navy had one just like that SOG. They didn't hit him; he veered off. Of course, general quarters sounded, and we ran back aboard ship. He come in again, and they opened up on him again. Anyway, he come landing. We took off right after they took him aboard. But I'm up there watching, and they're lifting him aboard in a crane, and here comes a launch from the Perth and the Dutch destroyer, both, to apologize. He was mad (chuckle); he was cussing them out. But it was a mistake on the signals, I guess.

Marcello: By this time, do you realize the hopelessness of your situation? Or do you feel that you're still going to make

it back to Australia and get away from all this?

Douglas: Everything looked hopeless at that time. Really I see what you've been asking. The whole month looked hopeless to me--the whole month of February--because we was out-gunned and out-airplaned and out-everything, you know. We was short on everything like they eventually was at the end of the war. But it didn't look to me like we had chance to do anything at the time.

Apparently, the Dutch, they just . . . they didn't care. Like, in Surabaja when we would be bombed there--we was bombed at that dock two or three times--the Dutch ships would abandon ship and go over to an air raid shelter. There's the old Houston out there and the Perth just firing away, and those Dutchmen abandoned ship. Well, it was unheard of; the American Navy wasn't about to do anything like that.

But anyway, when we pull out that night, there was a guy that hung out in the sickbay that was a radio operator named Jim Ballinger--he lives in Chattanooga--he came running down to sickbay and said, "We're going to Norfolk, Virginia!" We had word by the time the skipper had it, I guess (chuckle). He said, "Our orders are to get our butt out of here. We're not looking for anything else, nobody to jump on or nothing. We got orders to get out of here."

Marcello: Now from what I've read, you were surrounded.

Douglas: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, describe the mad dash that the Houston now makes to break free and get out of there.

Douglas: Okay, well, getting this word, we wasn't in general quarters; we was in Condition Two. So for the first night of that whole month, I took my pillow and my blanket and went up on the quarterdeck and stretched out and really went to sleep, because I knew we wasn't hunting to jump on anybody. We'd heard the nearest ship was sixty miles north--the nearest Jap ship. I wake up, guessing about eleven o'clock or 11:30 at night, and the guns are firing and general quarters is going. So I take my pillow and blanket and run back to the sickbay and get my aid bag and come back to my station. Chief Griffin . . . I realize that we was in a bad situation. I never had wore my lifejacket, and he was always raising . . . he couldn't swim, so he wore his all the time. I looked in that rack, and there wasn't any left; it was the one right by our first aid box. So he had made it to the station before me--he and Day, the other pharmacist's mate--and they was all back by the galley door right behind where our aid station was. I hollered for him, and he hollered at me. There he was, and he had a lifejacket for me. He said, "Now put it on! I'm giving

you an order to put it on!" He didn't have to argue with me then (chuckle), so I put it on.

Marcello: Now by this time, had the Houston been hit or anything?

Douglas: No, she hadn't been hit, but she's firing; everything on her's going. Machine guns are going. I don't know . let's see, the machine guns might not have been going right then, because the searchlights wasn't on us yet. But anyway, we just squatted down there. We discussed it later, and we felt four distinct . . . what we feel was torpedo hits. I think they estimated eight or ten hit her, and then there was shells hitting her all over, too. But the guns are all firing and everything; you couldn't hardly distinguish which was which. Some smoke--steam-- came up in the passageway. It felt like something had hit just below us, so we ran out to the fantail. When we got to the fantail, the order already was to abandon ship. I immediately thought, "Well, hell, they've gone crazy-- jumping off this ship!" But the first abandon ship order had been given, and we hadn't heard it; the PA system was screwed up.

Marcello: What did it feel like when those torpedoes hit that ship?

Douglas: It just rumbles a ship, just shakes it--big, deep rumble. It just shakes the ship all over. Of course, the main battery firing shakes the ship, too.

So I was just dumfounded when I saw those guys peeling off the ship. About that time, somebody--I guess, some officer--said, "Everybody back to their guns! The skipper's going to beach her on Sumatra. They're going to beach her and give everybody a better chance to get off." Some of the guys went back to their guns. I think they was about out of ammunition; I understand some of them was firing star shells through those 5-inch guns.

Marcello: Now by this time, had the Japanese put the searchlights on you yet?

Douglas: Yes. They're on us right then.

Marcello: That must be a rather awful feeling.

Douglas: Well, I tell you, the first one I saw was . . . no, by the time I get back there, they're not on us.

Marcello: That is, by the time you get back to the fantail?

Douglas: Right. I go between the turret that had been knocked out by the bomb and the bulkhead to the other side, and the searchlight looked like it was right on me. Then they got us . . . immediately, they was nearly on us from every direction--searchlights. I know the machine guns was firing then. Whether they'd been firing before that . . . they was hitting us with machine guns before that, I understand.

Marcello: Those ships had to have been pretty close if they were

using machine guns.

Douglas: Had to be.

Marcello: They were, in effect, raking the decks, you might say.

Douglas: That's right. That's what they was doing. I don't know what the range of a .50-caliber is, but it isn't very far . . . or maybe .30-calibers, I don't know. I understand up forward that some of the Marines and some of the seamen had B.A.R.'s out trying to shoot some of the searchlights out. You know, a B.A.R.'s range is sure not very far.

But anyway, we took some more hits, and the ship stopped . . . or nearly stopped; the engines was all stopped. At the time when I got back there, she'd been slowed down. She'd took . . . as I understand, the aft engine room had took a torpedo. Then it seemed to me like just a minute or so that she took some more hits, and that stopped all power.

Then I heard the abandon ship order given then. The bugle sounded and everybody was hollering, "Abandon ship!" So a bunch of us went to the fantail, and there was a bunch of liferafts stacked up there. Somebody cut the lines, and we threw those over. There was one tied to the side of the turret--a great big one. We cut it off and threw it over. I fell in a hole--darn near fell in a hole--on the fantail, and somebody grabbed me. That's where chiefs' quarters was.

I don't today know who that was. But if I'd fell down in there, I'd have never got out, because that was all tore up in there. So we come back up here, and I sat down on the deck and pulled my protective clothing pants off--flash clothing with a hood deal. I pulled those off and my shoes and just went over to the side of the ship and jumped.

Marcello: Was there any hesitation at all in doing this?

Douglas: Oh, yes, it wasn't easy to jump in that water. It was pretty black. Just as I jumped, I thought, "I'm not supposed to jump with a lifejacket on, or dive--either one; it can break your neck!" Hell, it was too late then; I'd already jumped (chuckle). But my head just went under, and my aid bag was around here (gesture), and it kind of pulled my head under, and I come out of it, and I let it go. I should have held on to it; I needed it later.

But they was firing; explosions were going in the water; and they're shooting over us and there are some short rounds. The ship's on fire, and she's listing to starboard and kind of like this (gesture). She was drifting, and I'm here (gesture). I swam just as hard as I could swim to get away from all that explosions around her. I got back off out there, and she's drifting away from me, too. I just lay

there in my lifejacket and looked at that . . . helluva sight. People were being blowed up in the water and screaming and hollering and trying to get away from her, I guess. They fired for a good while; I don't know how long. But you could see the explosions--the lights--in with the guys. There was lots of guys bound to have got killed after they got in the water.

The concussions . they hit close enough to me that I thought I was hit several times. It feels like just a bunch of fingers hitting you all at the same time right in the stomach. I'd reach down and feel. It'd hurt; it hit that hard. I didn't know whether I was hit or not. Then one hit right by me and didn't go off; it would have killed me. I doubled up, and it didn't go off. I don't know how large a shell it was, but I know it went "plomp," and I doubled up. If it had went off, it'd have killed me.

Marcello: I assume there are all sorts of people around you in the water.

Douglas: Not right with me. Most of them was up there by the ship. I had kind of got off by myself there.

Marcello: Did this kind of panic you a little bit?

Douglas: It did a little bit. Not right at the time because I was trying to get away from these explosions. But after I got

off out here and the firing and everything stopped--I guess an hour or maybe longer--I could hear some guys talking or hollering. I swam in that direction, and it was a liferaft. It wound up with about thirty of us or thirty-five of us hanging on the raft; there was too many to get in. There was a couple of slightly wounded guys in there and a couple or three guys without life-jackets, but the rest of us hung on. We rigged a rope up--I don't know where that came from--trying to pull it toward the beach. You could see the mountains in the skyline.

Marcello: By this time, it's dawn. Or is it still dark?

Douglas: No, it's still night.

Marcello: You're seeing the mountains and so on by moonlight.

Douglas: Yes, just the outlines of the mountains. So they rigged up . . . they tore planks from inside the thing and rigged up oars and a tiller. The rest of us was ganged around it kicking and trying to get into the beach. But we never did make it to the beach. The next day, of course, the tide was going out, and it was taking us out to the Indian Ocean, was where it was taking us. Of course, until it broke day, we didn't know what we was into. We didn't know they was landing there. In fact, we'd get on that . . . "Well, them Dutch will be out here and pick us up

in the morning." Then it broke day, and we saw what we was into.

Marcello: What did you see that you were into?

Douglas: Jap ships stopped putting stuff back and forth to the beach. They'd already put their shock troops ashore sometime during the night, and they was carrying materials and this type of stuff . . . some troops. There was, oh, just lines of them out from the beach out . . . oh, it wasn't too far.

Marcello: How far were you from the beach? You would probably have to estimate this, of course.

Douglas: I'd say . . . I could swim it if it wasn't for the tide; it wasn't that far. In fact, I left that raft twice to swim, because I could swim like a fish. I got scared to be by myself, and I went back to the raft. But anyway, I'd say it's two or three hundred yards from the beach, maybe farther than that. I don't know.

But anyway, that tide was taking us right down through those transports, right alongside some of them. Some of our guys left the raft to go over and get hold of that Jacob's ladder type deal or rope, and they'd shake them off. They wouldn't let them come aboard, and they'd get back in the raft.

Finally, here came a landing barge, and there was four

or five soldiers with rifles pointed at us and a guy with this machine gun pointed at us. We thought they'd been sent out there to kill us, because we had been told by our skipper, as far as they knew, that the Japanese did not take prisoners. So that's one of the times in my life I thought that I didn't have no chance. But anyway, they just laughed like hell and went on.

Then another barge came out there and hooked onto us and tried to pull us into the beach. The tide was so strong that they couldn't pull us in with everybody hanging on. They took most of the guys in the ship, and me and about four or five guys stayed on the raft. It came up to the top of the water then, and they could pull us into the beach.

They lined us up, and there was a bunch of Jap soldiers standing out there with rifles. We thought again they was going to kill us, but I had a little doubt then. I didn't have any doubt when that first boat came by. So some Jap officer or sergeant stepped up and said, "Do not be afraid. You're not going to be killed. You're now prisoners of the Great Dai Nippon Army."

Marcello: I have two questions at this point that I would like to interject. What sort of condition were you in at this point?

Douglas: Perfect. Eighteen years old, good health, good condition.

Marcello: Let me rephrase my question. You had been in the water most of the night. I assume the water had oil and so on and so forth on it. What sort of shape were you in with regard to your clothing and from having been in this oil and so on and so forth?

Douglas: Real tired and we was black from the oil--everybody was.

Marcello: That bunker oil is kind of heavy, isn't it?

Douglas: It's just like jelly. You could nearly pick it up in the water. It was kind of like Jello; a little melted Jello was about what it was like. Being in the water all night, you're all kind of wrinkled up. I chilled all night. I often wondered whether it was just because I was scared or whether I was cold. It was right on the equator; it shouldn't have been that cold. But I worried about sharks all night. Everytime somebody's foot would hit me, I'd think it was a shark. But anyway, as tired and wore out as we was, we didn't know if they was going to kill us or not. They immediately put us to work.

Marcello: What were your first impressions of these Japanese in terms of appearance and so on and so forth?

Douglas: Well, they wasn't mean to us; the first group wasn't. They was working right alongside of us. We was kind of a sideshow to them, and they was to us. I'd never been around

a Japanese.

Marcello: Were you fully clothed except for your shoes?

Douglas: No, I didn't have any shoes. I had a pair of shorts on and that protective clothing jacket. That's all I had on. It was a pair of Navy shorts that had been cut off, not undershorts; they just had pockets in them.

Marcello: I've heard some of the former prisoners say that the Japanese uniform looked rather scruffy to them.

Douglas: Oh, they did. That part, yes. They were very cheaply made. Yes, they did look scruffy. But I tell you one dern thing, they're working horses. They got right in there. They'd bring stuff in on those barges, and we'd run out there, and they'd put it on your shoulders. They had a little asphalt road about a hundred yards over there, and we'd stack that stuff up, and trucks would take it on.

Marcello: Now they're not harassing you or anything at this point.

Douglas: No. At no time that first day did I see anybody slapped, hit, or mistreated. We just had to work.

Marcello: Did they loot you or search you or things of that sort?

Douglas: Well, no, they didn't loot us. They searched us for knives or guns and this type of deal, but as far as taking anything away from anyone, they did not. We expected it, but they didn't.

Marcello: Do you think that these were probably front-line troops

that you were dealing with here?

Douglas: Combat troops, yes, although they weren't the actual infantry troops. These were the guys unloading these barges, but they were combat troops. I didn't see anybody hit or slapped around.

Marcello: Did they feed you at all that first day?

Douglas: No, they didn't have anything to eat. God, I wasn't hungry anyway. Well, some of them offered us some of their rice that they had in their mess kits. I didn't eat a thing that day; I was just still nervous, I guess, and upset.

Marcello: So where did you sleep that night?

Douglas: Right there. They laid a tarpaulin out just off of the beach, and it wasn't enough. I never did get on it; I slept on the ground, but it was all right. It was sandy . kind of under-the-palm-trees type of deal.

We got up the next morning, and they had gotten some ox carts, two-wheel ox carts; great big two-wheel jobs. They were supposed to be pulled by oxen, but we was the oxen. They put stuff on there and tied it on just as much as they could get on there, and we pushed and pulled those things to Serang, Java. It's twenty-five or thirty miles, something like that.

Marcello: How long did it take you to go that distance?

Douglas: All day until into the night--about ten or eleven o'clock

at night, I'd guess. That's the first time I saw anybody slapped when we get into Serang.

Marcello: But again, they did not harass you on the trip from the beach into Serang.

Douglas: Well, they told us . . . I take that back. I did see a guy get shoved because he was walking too slow, but not really beat like happened later. No, they didn't harass us. They told us when we started out . . . they passed the word if anybody escaped, they'd kill everybody. So there was plenty of opportunity at that time to have slipped off into the jungle, because we was strung out for a mile or so. But the bad part of the march in pulling those carts was the hot asphalt. We was all about an inch taller when we got there than we was when we started. Everybody had solid blisters on their feet.

Marcello: Were most of you without shoes?

Douglas: Everybody. Oh, well, one or two guys had their shoes. That's the silliest thing in the world, to sit down and pull your shoes off. I don't know why in the world everybody had it in their mind to pull them off. I didn't have any shoes for eight months. I could have had big laced boots on, and that lifejacket would have held me up. It wouldn't have made any difference. But I just didn't know.

Marcello: Now did they feed you and so on on this march from the beach to Serang?

Douglas: No. If they did, I don't remember it. I remember stopping one place, and they drew some water out of a well and gave us some water. About the only water we had on the beach was from coconuts--milk out of those coconuts--or only some Jap giving you water out of his canteen.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that the troops were strung out for well over a mile on this march.

Douglas: I'm sure it was that far.

Marcello: In other words, they had gathered quite a few of the Houston survivors by this time, then.

Douglas: They started gathering them up and bringing them in from different parts of the beach. Now I understand some troops got killed after they got on the beach by the natives, the Bantam Bay natives. You've probably talked to Charlie Pryor and some of them about that. In fact, this Marine master gunnery sergeant, Standish, I wasn't in his group when he got ashore; a bunch of them did get ashore. He cleaned his .45-caliber up and took off in the jungle, and they never heard of him since. We're sure that the natives killed him. I'm sure they had a tough time doing it, because he was a rough, tough character.

Marcello: This brings to mind another question. You mentioned that

on this march into Serang the Japanese had warned you of the consequences of escape, and to your knowledge nobody did try to escape. There really was noplacement to go, was there?

Douglas: No. But at the time, we don't know it. We don't know that they've taken the island, and we don't know what's going on.

Marcello: The natives aren't loyal to anybody. Or I should put it this way, the natives are loyal to whomever had the guns.

Douglas: Whoever is in charge. They was pro-Japanese; there's no doubt about it . . . that particular end of the island. The Dutch had always had trouble with the Bantam Bay natives. Every village we went through . . . they had to close those carts up before we would start through the village. The natives would try to get at us with their bolos and their parangs, their knives. The Japs would get on each side of us and get those carts closed up and protect us from the natives killing us. I thought, "What the hell! I thought we was up here trying to help these people out, and here they are wanting to kill us!" And they would have killed us if it hadn't been for the Japanese, I'm sure. We had no way to protect ourselves.

But we get into Serang, and they take us to the headquarters there. It had been the Dutch governor's palace for that particular province--a beautiful place. They take

us in one at a time and get our name, rank, and serial number; they didn't ask me anymore than that. I didn't know anymore than that, anyway (chuckle). So that's when we all . they'd bring you back out and take another one in and so forth. They had our officers sitting over there in the corner of the building, and they may have interrogated them a little stronger, I don't know. Then they came out, and somebody hollered attention in Japanese. Everybody was slow getting up, and there's some Jap officer or sergeant or somebody that run along the front and slapped several guys. Now that's the first time I saw anybody slapped. But we was all stoved up, and everybody's feet was in bad shape.

Marcello: And he did literally slap these people. It wasn't gun butts or fists or anything of that nature.

Douglas: No, right then that's all it was. He slapped about four or five guys in the front ranks. Luckily, I was in the back rank (chuckle) that particular time. Of course, I was slapped and beat a lot of times after that.

Then they put us in a prison in Serang, which, incidently, some friends of mine just visited this past October; that old jail's still there. They kept us there six weeks.

Marcello: Now what kind of a prison was this?

Douglas: Terrible place. It was a peacetime . . . they had convicts--murderers and so forth--in there.

Marcello: So it had been a civilian jail in peacetime.

Douglas: Okay, they took the convicts and put them in a portion of the jail and just crammed us into these other cells. We had forty-six men in my cell, and the Dutch writing on the door indicated that it was for twenty-something men. They just damn near didn't feed us at the time we was there. They had a little tin cup about that big around (gesture) and about like that, and they'd feed you twice a day. Some days they just wouldn't feed you. They had plenty of rice.

About the last two or three weeks I was there, they picked twenty trustees under twenty years of age. I was eighteen, so I got picked as one of those. They moved us up to the front of the jail, and they'd take us out on working parties outside. They had all the Dutch women and kids interned, and the Dutch civilians was in this deal as guides. We'd go over and chop wood and draw water and stuff for these people, and, boy, they'd feed us good and them poor guys were dying just from starvation in the jail.

Marcello: In other words, the other people that were remaining in the jail didn't do anything; they were just stuck in

those cells.

Douglas: Just locked up in there. Not enough water to drink. They had a wooden "thunder box," we called it, for a toilet, and you pee'd on the floor in a drainage deal. They'd come in occasionally and wash that out. It had a drainage system that run all through the prison.

But anyway, when we get up to the front of the jail, that's when I could see they had plenty of rice in the cook shack right there, and we'd get all we wanted--this twenty trustees. So they'd feed us with tin plates, and we'd just get all we wanted. So we'd take as much as we thought we could get by without them getting suspicious. We wasn't supposed to go back to these cells at night. So it'd be my night tonight and yours tomorrow night. We'd all watch for the guard, and you'd run back there and cram it through the bars and get back up to the front. We never did get caught. Of course, it helped a little, but we couldn't get that much back to them.

Marcello: Now in the meantime, did you have time to get cleaned up or anything?

Douglas: They let us . . . let's see. I don't know if that was just us trustees or not; it might have been. They had a well in the courtyard of this thing, and there was plenty of water. I took a bath or two then--just plain water, no

soap.

Marcello: Did you manage to get some of that oil and grime off of you?

Douglas: Very little of it. Like I say, if there'd been soap, I might have. Oh, for six or eight months I had that in the pores of my skin--little black splotches. Now I'm not sure whether they let anybody out of those cells or not. I don't guess they did; it must have just been us trustees they let use it.

But first when we was in the cells, why, we had a little window way back up in the corner. You'd kind of figure out from that when feeding time was. Of course, we was always wrong (chuckle) about what time. We'd look at where it was shining on the deck, you know. Another six weeks there, in my opinion, would have killed everybody that was in those cells.

Marcello: Did they harass you physically while you were there in terms of beatings and things of that nature?

Douglas: No, they didn't. They didn't mistreat any of us trustees. One day we was making too much racket before I was pulled out of the cell, and some Jap officer run back there and threw his little old snub-nosed .25-caliber or something in that cell. In English he said he was going to start shooting . . . for us to be quiet. I don't know what the

hell we was doing--singing or something. As far as physically abusing anybody, I didn't see any of it there.

But when we leave there, they load us on trucks and take us to Batavia. Oh, we was nearly all day with the bridges out and all these ferries and whatever we was getting those trucks across on. When we got into the Bicycle Camp in Batavia, I'll bet there wasn't fifty guys that could get up out of the truck on their own and get out. That's how bad a shape they was in. They'd all messed in their pants; everybody had dysentery.

Marcello: Dysentery had already set in by this time.

Douglas: Oh, yes, it set in right away in the jail with those sanitary conditions. Everybody was just that weak and that sick that they couldn't even hang their butt over to the side of that truck to shit. Everybody had messed in their pants and pissed in their pants; it was running out of the trucks. That's how bad off it was. Now like I say, I was in pretty good shape, because I had ate better that last couple or three weeks; I guess it was a couple of weeks.

Marcello: By this time, are you able to gather any material possessions? I'm referring now to extra clothing or anything of that nature?

Douglas: Oh, I got a pair of Dutch shoes over at that headquarters one day and cut about an inch-and-a-half off the toes and

tried to walk in those, and I couldn't. I had to throw those away. But that's all. I had the same things I come off the ship with.

Marcello: Why'd you cut the inch-and-a-half off? Were they too short?

Douglas: They was too short (chuckle). They'd been made for those natives, and they was small shoes. I couldn't walk in them; they hurt my feet, so I threw them away.

We were on this march up from the beach, and we came to a cut in the road. There'd been a Dutch truck that'd been hit by a mortar or shell and had blown up. There was a pair of shoes in the road, and one of them had part of a foot still in it. There was a hell of a scramble to get those shoes. I don't remember whether it was an Australian or who got them. It seems to me like it was an Australian that got them.

Marcello: Now by this time, I gather that all of the members off the Houston had not yet been united.

Douglas: No.

Marcello: You might be united by the time you get into Bicycle Camp. But you just mentioned this Australian soldier, so I gather that this is a multinational group that's going into Bicycle Camp.

Douglas: Right. Well, most of the survivors from the Perth and

Houston had been united, because they had a theatre in Serang where they was keeping a group of them. They went out at the same time we did. But there was another group kept somewhere else, and I forget the name of the place. But we're all in Bicycle Camp; they brought them all in there, so we got a pretty head count by the time we got there.

Marcello: Describe what Bicycle Camp looked like from a physical standpoint.

Douglas: When I arrived?

Marcello: Yes.

Douglas: Like Heaven compared to what we'd come from! It had been a military camp--a Dutch military native camp, a bicycle battalion, I think, or division, whatever you call it. It, of course, had a big fence around it, but it had huts; it had running water. They had latrines with running water in these latrines. It looked pretty dern good to us at the time.

Of course, a few days later after we arrived there, the American 131st Field Artillery arrived. All of us got some clothes at this time.

Marcello: Describe what your quarters were like here at Bicycle Camp.

Douglas: Well, they was tile floors or concrete block floors. They even had a theatre deal that they rigged up. I don't know

whether that had been a theatre; I guess it had, because it had a stage in it. They put on some shows there. There was so many people in there that I slept on the veranda. You didn't have much space--about like we did the rest of the time, you know, just space for yourself.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what sort of bedding facilities you had in these quarters.

Douglas: None. I didn't have any until I acquired some. One of these guys gave me a blanket; somebody did. Paul Leatherwood gave me some clothes, and I guess he gave me a blanket, too.

Marcello: How long was it after you arrived that the people from the 131st Field Artillery came in?

Douglas: I'd say about a week or a few days. It wasn't long after we arrived.

Marcello: Describe your meeting with those individuals when they came in.

Douglas: Oh, we was tickled to death to see them, because . . . well, just to see some other Americans for one thing. They came in with all their gear, and we was in desperate need of clothing and shoes and this type of deal. But not only that; they still had an organization. They come in, and they had money. The Japs let them buy food and supplement our issue. That's the only place they let them do it, but they did while we was there. We ate better there than we did

anyplace else.

But they put the strict Japanese discipline on us there. That's what they said they was going to do, and they did it.

Marcello: Let's back up a minute before we get to that point and talk a little bit more about this meeting with the 131st Field Artillery. Now you mentioned that they came in with plenty of clothing and equipment. Is it safe to say that they were more than willing to share what they had with the Houston survivors?

Douglas: Yes. Well, it was an individual thing, but I think they did real well. There wasn't no time until everybody had a few things, you know--shorts. Like, Paul was six-foot-two, and there I'm five-foot-eight and I weighed about 140 pounds. I just took the scissors and needle and made me some shorts. That's about all you needed. Just before I left there eight months later, Sergeant Rogers gave me a pair of shoes that was wore out GI shoes, but I sure was glad to get them (chuckle). But, yes, they shared damn well, I think, and we all became real close friends.

Marcello: Did you finally get cleaned up here in Bicycle Camp?

Douglas: Yes, I stood for two hours under that water. Close to where I was billeted, they just had water running all the time. They finally come in there, and somebody fixed it

where you could turn it on and off, but it was a big stream of water running. I got hold of some soap somewhere, and I know I stood under that thing for two hours just "eating it up." It was really nice.

Marcello: That must have felt pretty good.

Douglas: You could get all the rice you wanted. When we arrived, the Australians was there, and they all stood back and let us . . . we didn't have anything to eat out of. Me and another old boy, we took a helmet and pulled the inside out of the helmet and cleaned it out, and that's what we got our rice in. That's all there was, was just rice, but you could get all you wanted.

Marcello: You were talking about the shower and bathing facilities awhile ago. Am I to assume they were adequate here at Bicycle Camp?

Douglas: Oh, yes. Yes, there was lots of water there. Well, just every barracks had a latrine, and they had water running through those latrines, and they had water that you could shower with.

Marcello: This is the old Dutch-type latrine, is it not?

Douglas: Yes, the water was running through it; a straddle trench, but it's concrete about that deep (gesture) with water running through it all the time.

Actually, well, I worked in the hospital there at first.

I got my story screwed up there a little bit. I first worked in the hospital hut, and then I moved to the barracks area. I had a little more room in the hospital hut taking care of the sick. Me and this doctor had a few cross words, and I moved to the barracks area and started going out on the working parties.

Marcello: Well, describe what the hospital facilities were like here at Bicycle Camp.

Douglas: It became pretty good. At first, there wasn't much-- just what aid equipment and what field equipment had been brought in by the Australians and by the well, there was a medical detachment with the 131st. They finally set up a pretty good operating room and pretty good facilities there, really. They could do almost any kind of operation right there, and they had a good surgeon off of our ship, Dr. Burroughs.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that when you all came into camp a great many of you had dysentery. Were you able to bring the dysentery under control after you got to Bicycle Camp? If so, how did you do it?

Douglas: Fairly under control; there was always some. Well, your sanitary conditions was better, and I think that's the answer to it. Drugs . . . I don't think they had that much to treat it with just like from there on.

Marcello: Did you resort to eating the charcoal and so on later on to counteract dysentery?

Douglas: There was some of that. But I took care of the sick all the time, and I don't ever remember giving anybody charcoal for it.

Marcello: What were the majority of the cases that you treated here at the hospital building in Bicycle Camp?

Douglas: Mostly it was dysentery and just run-down people from no food, a malnutrition type of deal. It was just a matter of eating and getting on their feet. Of course, the natural things would come along, and you got every kind of disease in the world . . . malaria. But I don't think malaria had hit us there. Well, I know it hadn't. No, malaria hadn't hit us there. But there was some appendicitis; and then there was some pneumonia; and then there was a couple of cases of TB probably. I can't remember right off-hand.

Marcello: But in terms of general outbreaks, the biggest thing was still dysentery.

Douglas: Right. That wasn't very bad there after they kind of got on their feet a little bit. You could just see guys overnight getting better because we was getting a little more to eat. Then the artillery outfit showed up, and they allowed them--we had a separate kitchen--and they allowed them to go out and buy extra food. You felt a little bad

walking by those Australians with your mess kit with a couple of eggs on it or sometimes a piece of chicken in your mess kit with your rice that the Japs would issue. But they'd allow them to do it, and the Australians apparently had throwed their money away, so they said, thinking the Japs would confiscate it. But they didn't take any of ours. So the artillery outfit used their monies for the group of Americans.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit more about the food here at Bicycle Camp. What sort of food were you getting?

Douglas: Well, we got the rice; we'd get eggs; occasionally, we'd get some meat. They'd have stew, and you'd get some meat in the stew and vegetables and whatever they could buy out on the market.

Marcello: How long did these good times last? Now obviously, the money was going to give out sooner or later.

Douglas: Yes. Well, we left there in October of '42, and that's the last of that.

Marcello: But you still did manage to get a half-decent diet right up until October of 1942.

Douglas: Not like being here but better than we had later; quite a bit better, really.

Marcello: What would you have to say about the quality of the rice the Japanese were providing?

Douglas: Well, it was just raw rice, and it was the same thing they was eating. It wasn't polished rice like you have here. I understand if we'd eaten polished rice, as much as we ate, that we couldn't have survived on it, because the vitamins are in the husks, and the food value. So it was identical to what they had.

Marcello: Did your cooks have very much of a problem learning how to cook that rice?

Douglas: Yes, a helluva problem (chuckle). We'd get it in just big old stuck-together gobs at first. They just didn't know how to cook rice. The average American does not know how . . . the average cook doesn't know how to cook it. But they learned; they learned to cook it just as well as anyone.

Marcello: In other words, you just had to learn the hard way, though. The Japanese didn't teach you how to cook the rice.

Douglas: No, they just said, "Here it is." They'd issue so much rice per man. Really, in Bicycle Camp, Batavia, there never seemed to be any shortage of rice that I remember.

They had working parties, and if you was sick, you didn't have to work. That wasn't true after we left there. They just asked for so many men, and there was enough men to cover their working parties. Going out on the working parties wasn't that bad.

Marcello: I was going to mention that they probably had more manpower here than they had jobs available.

Douglas: That's right. That's exactly it. We'd work around the foundry some and different things . moving oil drums. You wasn't supposed to bring anything back into camp; you wasn't supposed to trade with the natives. But that's the only chance you had, and that's one reason I was glad to get back to the barracks and go out on the working parties. Because I'd been hearing they wasn't bad, and they was getting a little extra trading here and there with the natives.

You'd pick up things to fix up around your bunk area. I finally got me some wood and made me a bunk about six inches off the deck, and I got some burlap.

I was in a working party one day, and we'd been out to the foundry. Guys had picked up . . . now this had been blown up by the Dutch before the Japanese came in, I assume, or it might have been shelled, I don't know. But anyway, everything was just blown up, and there was nails and bolts and screws and everything just laying everywhere. Nearly everybody had them some of those nails and screws-- they was just old rusty nails and things. But they checked our company, our kumi, they called it, searched them. They'd just pick one out and didn't search them all. Damn,

they whipped nearly everybody in the outfit. I didn't have anything. They got all four of the guys around me and just beat the hell out of everybody! They had, I bet you, ten or fifteen guys knocked cold laying over there on the side. They just dragged them out of ranks and beat the devil out of them. An Australian sergeant major who was in charge under the Australian colonel went up there to try to stop it, and they just beat him up, too. They knocked him cold. That type of stuff.

They'd walk in your barracks, and you had to holler, "Attention!" in Japanese when you'd see one. They'd just indiscriminately beat you and slap you and knock you around.

"Tex" McFarland, they made him whip me one day to punish him. We've had a lot of laughs about it since. He's wrote a book called Gandy Dancer; I think it's still in the publisher's hands. He's got a chapter in there when these Koreans took over--the Korean guards.

Marcello: Now is this still in Bicycle Camp?

Douglas: Yes. The corporal on up was Japanese, but the walking guards was Koreans. The first week or so they had us, that they took over, they'd have you to beat one another instead of them beating us. That changed; they quit doing that; they just started beating you.

But old "Tex" slept right next to me, and he was a great big old boy from Littlefield; he lives in Austin now. He hadn't no more than said, "Well, they won't make me whip one of my friends," and around the corner walks this guard. Somebody hollered, "Attention!" and we jumped to attention. Old "Tex," he's slow getting to attention. They called him and me out from the veranda, and to punish him they had him whip me. He wasn't going to do it. That guard backed off with that bayonet, and I said, "You'd better slap me, 'Tex,' or he's going to stick you with that bayonet!" So old "Tex," he'd haul off and he'd hit me, and I'd roll. He wasn't hitting me very hard; I was acting like he was. But it wasn't fooling that guard any. He was screaming and hollering and about to stick old "Tex" with that bayonet, and I said, "You better slap me!" Old "Tex" slapped me for a flip then (chuckle), you know, and the guard went on. Old "Tex" sat down and cried like a baby. "Damn, I swore I wouldn't do it, and here I had to do it!" That was all of it; it didn't hurt me.

Marcello: Okay, let's back up and talk just a little bit more about those working parties. You mentioned that from time to time you would trade with the natives when you went on these working parties. What'd you have to trade?

Douglas: Well, they'd buy anything--a pair of shorts, shirt, blankets,

sheet, shoes, watches. Oh, there was always any kind of jewelry.

Marcello: Well, where did you get this sort of thing?

Douglas: Well, there was a lot of it in the camp if you could . . . I never could acquire any of it while I was there. But you could finagle around and take something out for somebody that had something and trade it and get part of it; that's the way I was having to do. But there was a lot of jewelry brought into this camp by the Australians. Man, they'd pay any price for a watch or ring or diamonds or anything like that. Now I never had any of those. If they could get a chance to slip off . . . like, at the foundry you might get off over here out of the sight of the Japanese and trade with some of the Javanese.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that the work on these details wasn't necessarily that hard.

Douglas: Not in Batavia, no. Not in any that I was on. But you had to work some, but you could kind of goof off a little bit.

Marcello: Were you closely supervised by Japanese guards on these work details?

Douglas: Yes, they was all around us. But like I say, they apparently wasn't pushing them too strong, so they wasn't pushing us too strong.

Marcello: In other words, they more or less let you alone on these work details as long as you did your job or at least they thought you were doing your job.

Douglas: Yes, whatever they wanted done. We'd just go out and maybe we'd move oil drums. Well, we'd move them over here one day, and the next time you'd go out, you'd move them back over there. They had a big park there where they had a lot of drums in, and I worked there several times. A lot of work was cleaning up around the foundry--just more or less cleaning up. But it wasn't no big pushing deal there.

Then we had the little shows we'd have about once a week over there in the camp, which made it pretty good. We had some good musicians with us, professional people, magicians, guitar pickers, and goat ropers and whatever. That diverted a little bit. Of course, I understand there was some drinking went on there, but I never did see anybody drinking. I never did have a drink and didn't want one.

Marcello: Now I do know that at one point, after you and the 131st Field Artillery and the other prisoners had arrived in Bicycle Camp, the Japanese attempted to get all of you to sign a non-escape pledge. Do you remember that incident?

Douglas: Yes. I don't know exactly what was in the pledge. I know

we refused to . . . our officers refused for us to sign it for two or three days. They cut off the food. I felt they didn't have to go that far with it, because we signed it under duress. So I didn't figure our government would think anything about this. I understand they took the officers out there and lined them up against the wall and threatened to kill them if they didn't tell the guys to sign it.

Marcello: Did you sign it?

Douglas: Now I don't remember whether I signed it or whether they signed for us. I guess we signed it. I tell you, I just don't remember. I'm sure we did.

Marcello: Did you ever have any thoughts of escape?

Douglas: Oh, yes. Everybody had. But you couldn't escape there; we already knew that we couldn't. It wasn't no problem to get out of the camp--oh, a little problem--but you could get out of the camp. You could climb the fence and get out. But you've got no place to go. We knew the island had fell; we knew it was approximately 800 miles long, and it's 400 or 500 miles from there to Australia. There just wasn't any way.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that most of the talk about escape was rather loose talk and rather cheap talk, so to speak?

Douglas: Yes. There wasn't too much seriousness about escape. It

was kind of a deal where you just . . . I think everybody knew that you couldn't and just made up their mind to stay until we did get a chance. When we get to Burma, that was a different situation; everybody had it on his mind there.

Marcello: Now you mentioned awhile ago that very shortly after you arrived in Bicycle Camp, the Japanese informed you that you would be subject to the same sort of discipline that applied to the regular Japanese troops, so to speak.

Douglas: That's right.

Marcello: Describe what this Japanese discipline was like.

Douglas: Well, they slapped you and beat you at every opportunity. They didn't wait for something to go wrong. Well, they'd walk along and everybody had to stand at attention. Well, maybe your feet wasn't just right or you didn't salute just right or you didn't bow just right--anything like that. Like little kids, they didn't pass up an opportunity. They're not like us--"Well, try to do a little better next time," like we might say.

Marcello: Now what would the routine form of punishment be like?

Douglas: Slapping and . . . well, it'd vary. Sometimes it was kicking and rifle butts and this type of deal. I didn't have any rifle butts there; I got slapped and hit with their fists.

Marcello: After awhile do you learn how to "roll with the punch,"

so to speak?

Douglas: Well, no, not really. They don't hit as hard as a normal American would hit. They hit more like a woman, but it hurts and it'll cut you. But you're standing at attention and looking straight ahead; that's the way they wanted you. Well, I believe I could knock Ali down with him standing at attention--you know, get a "Sunday punch" on him. But they hit hard enough that it hurt (chuckle), but it wasn't that bad.

Marcello: Now what was the most extreme form of punishment that you saw here at Bicycle Camp?

Douglas: Putting bamboo poles under the legs here (gesture) and making them sit back on them. They was doing this that day that they caught all the guys . . . that they searched our company. They'd take a bamboo pole and put it in the bend of the leg and make them sit back like this (gesture) until their old legs would just go numb.

Marcello: In other words, they would put those bamboo poles behind the knees, so to speak, and then have the people lean on them.

Douglas: Sit back. Now that's the only torture-type deal I saw other than just beating.

Marcello: Evidently, that's excruciating.

Douglas: Oh, boy! I didn't have it done to me, but it must have been

real painful.

Marcello: Now am I to assume that you had to bow to the lowliest Japanese soldier during this period?

Douglas: Yes, that's right--everybody. Now in Bicycle Camp, they had a bunch of generals with a fence between us. They was British and Australian and Dutch; there wasn't any American generals. But they beat them, I believe, as bad if not worse than they did us, the privates--the guards. So rank didn't make any difference. In fact, they might have got a little worst of it. The bigger the guy was, it seemed to . . . they delighted in beating the big guys. It helped their ego or whatever.

Marcello: Now did you observe this corporal punishment taking place in the Japanese army?

Douglas: Oh, yes. That's the same thing they . . . if you got one more star than the next Jap, you can whip him anytime you want to. That's my understanding on it.

Marcello: Then the Japanese had the Koreans to whip up on, and the Koreans had the prisoners to do likewise.

Douglas: That's exactly the way they passed it right on down the line, and we had no one to jump on (chuckle).

Marcello: I gather it is safe to say that the Koreans were worse than the Japanese, if we can put it that way.

Douglas: Without a doubt. They're a lower class people, in the

first place--if you think you can get much lower than a Jap. But they're a little bit larger as a rule; they look just alike. But they was more sadistic to us; they seemed to be. Of course, they had the same orders the Jap guards had had, but, you know, that also comes down to an individual as to how much he's going to carry that out, how far he's going with it. They'll try to say that, well, they had orders to do this and orders to do that just like in Germany. Well, that's true, but they didn't have orders to go to extremes with it, which they did.

Marcello: I've heard one of the former prisoners say that it was true that the Koreans were following orders, but they didn't have to enjoy them so much.

Douglas: That's exactly what I'm trying to say. And they did things that was completely out of line and that they didn't have orders to do. They had orders to put their discipline on us--I understand that--but they didn't just have to take every opportunity and create an opportunity and this type, which they did.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that they would periodically pull sneak inspections of the barracks. How did these normally work?

Douglas: Well, no, I was talking awhile ago when they was pulling sneak inspections as we was coming in off of working

parties. But they'd also do that; they'd just come in and search. You don't know what they'd be searching for; they're just searching for any contraband, like you'd had a machine gun or something in there. There was some of that stuff that slipped by. Pieces of radios . . . several guys carried enough in to put one together. I didn't even know there was anybody doing it.

Marcello: Were you receiving any news at all from the outside world during your stay at Bicycle Camp?

Douglas: No, none that I know of. Now some of our officers might have been. All through the prison camp, I understand that the colonel and so forth was receiving some sketchy information about how the war was going but suppressed it--and rightly so--to keep us from getting our hopes up too much, I guess.

Marcello: At this point, how long do you think you're going to be a prisoner?

Douglas: Well, I tell you, when I was first captured, I had one dollar in my pocket, and I lost it betting we'd get out in two weeks (chuckle). I misguessed it by forty-two months. It became a . . . after a little . . . it didn't take long until you just didn't know whether you was ever going to get out. It just seemed so long; you just couldn't never think about it. You lived from day-to-day.

Marcello: I guess that's especially true when you got up in the

jungles, that is, that you lived from day-to-day and you thanked God that you were alive every morning.

Douglas: Absolutely. That's the way it was. You tried to not worry about home and tried to not brood about your food or your home or whatever. Of course, I wasn't married. Those guys that were worried about their families and this type of stuff had it just that much worse if they'd let it get hold of them. I often said that I can understand how a convict, say, in Huntsville can live. He has to live day-to-day; he can't worry about, "I'm going to be here ten years."

Marcello: But at least that convict knows when he's going to get out or approximately when he's going to get out.

Douglas: Yes, he's got a date. That makes a difference, because we didn't know. We had a general idea the last two or three years of how the war was going, but, heck, we didn't know. When they told us the war was over, I was prepared to stay another three years if I had had to. But I sure didn't want to (chuckle). Well, we knew it was getting fairly close, but we didn't really know; we was just guessing or hoping.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned awhile ago that there were some forms of recreation here at Bicycle Camp, and you had even mentioned some of this recreation. Did you have very much

opportunity for this sort of thing?

Douglas: Yes. We played tennis there. We didn't have a big enough place to play softball or baseball. Of course, later I'll tell you about that in Thailand. We played tennis and volleyball and basketball.

Marcello: Was there much fraternization with the other nationalities here at Bicycle Camp?

Douglas: Oh, yes. Yes, a lot. The Australians in particular.

Marcello: Although they did keep you segregated.

Douglas: Not really. There was just fenced-off huts, but you'd go anywhere you wanted to within the camp. There wasn't no restrictions on going over to visit an Australian friend.

Marcello: By this time, most of you are making pretty good friends with the Australians.

Douglas: Oh, yes. Even from the time we was sunk and from there on. We made a lasting friendship with them. I went to Australia four years ago and visited some of them. But when we leave Bicycle Camp and they put us on that ship, boy, oh, boy!!

Marcello: That's when you really knew that you were prisoners-of-war.

Douglas: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, I've one last comment to make with regard to Bicycle Camp, and I guess I need to put this in the form of a question. Is it safe to say that had you remained at

Bicycle Camp under those conditions that you experienced there, being a prisoner-of-war would not have been too bad a deal?

Douglas: No. It would have been a helluva lot better than it got.

Marcello: I mean, you know, being a prisoner-of-war under any circumstances isn't a good thing, but it still wasn't too bad comparatively speaking.

Douglas: No. No. Of course, our money would have run out; our food wouldn't have stayed that good, I understand that. But to have stayed there in the barracks where you had plenty of water and your sanitary conditions was better, it would have been a helluva lot better.

Marcello: Okay, now you mentioned that you leave Bicycle Camp in October of 1942. Describe how this process takes place.

Douglas: Okay. They just told everybody to pack up, and we walked for a ways and got on a

Marcello: How much notice did you have?

Douglas: I guess the day before . . . a day or two days, I don't remember. But anyway, we just packed what gear you got, and they take us to we walked a piece, and we rode a streetcar type of deal or like an "El" in Chicago or something like that. Anyway, we got to the docks, and they put us on this ship.

Marcello: What sort of gear did you have by this time?

Douglas: Well, I had acquired a barracks bag, and I had it about full of whatever I had. I'd made me a . . . somebody had made me a mess kit-type deal just out of tin and soldered it together. I cut me a frying pan out of the side of a brand new Buick. I took a chisel and a hammer (chuckle), and I chiseled it out of the side of a brand new Buick that had been wrecked and that was in the camp--there was several cars--and I made it right out of the door and made me a frying pan. I threw that thing away; that was too heavy to carry, but I started out carrying it. I had a barracks bag I tried to carry over my shoulders, and I had one helluva time on that little walk we made. But we didn't walk very far.

Marcello: In other words, you had accumulated so much stuff during that stay at Bicycle Camp that it did weigh quite a bit.

Douglas: Yes, it was too much to carry it the way I was trying to carry it.

Marcello: Am I to assume that all of the POW's had become scavengers by this time?

Douglas: That's right.

Marcello: In other words, any item, no matter how insignificant, would be collected because it might prove useful somewhere down the road.

Douglas: That's right. You never threw anything away. Regardless

of how bad your clothes got or anything, you just patched them; you didn't throw them away. I never tried the barracks bag bit anymore. I acquired me a Dutch pack in Singapore; that's what I had from then on.

Marcello: Okay, so when you received the word that you're to be transferred, is this a rather unsettling experience? In other words, have you more or less gotten into the routine of things in Bicycle Camp to the point where you don't know what's lying in front of you?

Douglas: We had no idea what was lying in front of us, but we wasn't too apprehensive about it. We thought it'd probably be the same anywhere, I guess, at the time; I think probably I did. It was a helluva awakening when we . . . actually, Singapore wasn't bad. We stayed there three months.

Marcello: Okay, so you get on this ship at the Batavia docks, I guess.

Douglas: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what the ship was like.

Douglas: Oh, it was a hell hole! Well, it was just an old transport. The holds where the cargo was carried, they had shelves in there, I guess, for cargo storage. As soon as I saw it, it reminded me of slave ships . . . the old slave ships from sailing days, because they just crammed us in these shelves. I'd say there was about three or four feet, and we was crammed right back in just as many as you could get in that

hold. Hot! Stinking! You had a can you went to the toilet in; you sat over by the ladder. You had to crawl over anybody if you had to use that. We was just crammed in there for five days.

Marcello: In other words, you literally have to lie down on these shelves, so to speak.

Douglas: You literally didn't have enough room to lie down; you didn't have that much room. You just had to kind of lay on one another, and you were just crammed in there really.

Marcello: Did you have any opportunities to get out on deck?

Douglas: They'd let a few out at a time. They had some toilets on topside, and they'd sometimes let you out for that. Not the first day, but I know when we pulled into Singapore, I was out on the top. I'd gotten my chance to get out on top. They let a few out.

Marcello: How did they feed you?

Douglas: They fed us just in big buckets of . . . they fed us barley instead of rice there.

Marcello: In other words, was it lowered down into these holds?

Douglas: Yes, it was just brought down the ladder, and you'd get your mess kit out.

Marcello: Were you still maintaining enough discipline that the food was divided more or less equally.

Douglas: Oh, yes. Yes, that was always done. There wasn't no

fighting over the food.

Marcello: In other words, even at this point yet, you are maintaining discipline.

Douglas: That's right. You had to. It would have been a bad situation without it. We had our officers in there with us, and they controlled it. I think it would have been controlled without them; well, it was controlled without them, because they took them away from us later.

Marcello: Discipline would be one of the keys to survival, I assume.

Douglas: Absolutely. Without it we would not have survived.

Marcello: What'd you do for drinking water?

Douglas: They gave us some drinking water there. They'd let a few guys out on deck and squirt the salt water on them. Boy, that felt great to get that water on you; we were just burning up in that hold--just absolutely burning up.

Marcello: Had you acquired a canteen by this time?

Douglas: No. I had a bottle like a big Coke bottle.

Marcello: I assume you had filled it before you went aboard the ship?

Douglas: Yes. That ran out right quick. They didn't give us enough water, but they did give us some on there, and some rice. But we was so hot and thirsty that I don't think we ate much rice.

Marcello: Was dysentery a problem once again?

Douglas: Not so much. We had some of it that, naturally, under those

conditions it brought it on to the guys that already had it, I guess. Diarrhea, I guess, more than dysentery there.

But it wasn't that bad, because we'd all got in pretty good shape in Bicycle Camp. The real sick people stayed in Bicycle Camp; they didn't move them with us. So everybody that went aboard ship wasn't in that bad a shape. Even the sailors off my ship had gotten back in shape, and the soldiers was in good shape all along at that time. So the trip was a miserable five-day deal. It was just stinking, hot, and miserable! You couldn't hardly breathe in there. But when we get to Singapore, they load us on trucks and take us to Changi Village.

Marcello: Now this is Changi Prison Camp that you went to as opposed to Changi Jail.

Douglas: That's right. We didn't go to the jail. We was in a big three-story barracks.

Marcello: This Changi Prison Camp evidently was a huge place, was it not?

Douglas: We could see the jail from our building. I never was over there, but we could see it from our building. It was just a huge prison. I guess it was a British army prison; I assume it was in peacetime.

Marcello: What did Changi look like from a physical standpoint,

that is, where you were?

Douglas: It was a pretty place, real pretty. It was beautiful. Barracks, heck, it had marble floors. It didn't have any furniture in it. You just slept on the deck. It had a little cook shack out to the side. We was up on a hill overlooking the ocean. The Japs left us fairly alone there; they didn't bother us. We was there three months.

Marcello: What sort of work details did you undertake here?

Douglas: Well, me, I got back into the medical branch there. This Army doctor, Dr. Lumpkin, had a sick call place. He didn't even know me, but I was a third class pharmacist's mate. I just went up and asked him one day did he need some help in the sick call room. He said, "Who are you," and I told him. He said, "Yes," so I went to work for him and worked for him until he died. I didn't have to go on the work details, but they began to work them a little stronger there in the garden. They set up a huge garden over there, and they'd work them pretty good in the garden.

Marcello: Now these people were actually clearing trees and so on and so forth, were they not, to make this garden?

Douglas: That's right. And planting it; they planted it. They had to clear off a huge area and plow it and whatever. Surely, they didn't have any horses or anything; they hand-plowed it or hand-dug it.

Marcello: But you actually never worked on this garden.

Douglas: No.

Marcello: I gather that the British more or less had control of this camp.

Douglas: Right. And they had Sikh Indians guarding each sector. They had kind of huge areas that you had to go through a check station and had the Sikh Indians with rifles. But there wasn't no problem. I know, like, to get to the hospital--I'd go over there to see sick guys or something--and I had to go through a couple of those check stations, but there wasn't no problem to getting through them. Of course, the Gurkha Indians said they was going to kill all those Sikhs when the war was over (chuckle) on account of this. They kind of went over and became pro-Jap. They was in the British army. Now right there, in my opinion . . . of course, this has nothing to do with what happened, but in my opinion, the Japanese and everybody else would have been better off if they'd left all the prisoners there--there was 50,000 or 60,000 troops there, and there was a barbed wire entanglement around it--and let the Allies feed them. Hell, they would have been less trouble to the Japs and less deaths and less everything.

Marcello: What was the food like here at Changi?

Douglas: Bad! It was bad there. When we got there, there'd been

two Red Cross ships that'd come in before we got there; the American Red Cross ships had come from the United States. The British had all the food and stuff that'd come on those ships. The first three days we were there, they gave us extra food, like bully beef and sardines and what-have-you. Then they tell us, "Your supplies have been sent to Burma. You'll get them when you get to Burma." That's the first we even knew of where we was going. We was only supposed to be there three days, and we stayed there three months. So they had just given us what the Japs issued, and that was a mess kit of rice and a handful of peanuts.

Marcello: Per day or per meal?

Douglas: Per meal. You got fed three times a day, but that was all we was getting. Those British was eating those American Red Cross supplies and eating good. They even had chicken pens and eggs and this type of stuff. So those Americans just started stealing them blind. It was funny, really. They wouldn't salute the British officers; everybody was damned mad at them. They whipped two or three of them British officers over that crap.

Marcello: Is this where the controversy over the "King's coconuts" developed? Do you remember that incident?

Douglas: Oh, yes, they got on them for several things--the coconuts

. and I know some boys that a British major got on for getting some oil out of the king's . . . pinching the king's oil out of this wrecked car. They run him down the street threatening to whip him. Yes, the coconut bit, I'd heard that. I'd forgotten about that (chuckle). "You're pinching the king's coconuts," and they was falling out of those trees.

Marcello: Is this the beginning of the Americans' contempt for the British?

Douglas: In there, I guess it was, because we hadn't been around them up until then.

Marcello: I may have been putting words in your mouth when I mentioned that, but I think I'm accurate in saying that the opinion that most of you had of the British was a rather low one.

Douglas: Yes. Oh, individually, I had several British friends, but as a rule we didn't get along with them. The Australians didn't get along with them either. We felt they was putting it on us there. They may have felt they was right. They may have been told that our supplies have gone; I'm satisfied they had. But to be eating like they was eating and letting us eat like we was eating, it wasn't any good.

Marcello: Did the Japanese more or less leave you alone here at

Changi?

Douglas: Yes. They'd have a head count every once in awhile. But as far as just roaming through the barracks like they'd done in Batavia and just indiscriminately whipping people and this type of thing, they didn't do it there.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were working in the sickbay at this time. Were you simply receiving the normal cases here?

Douglas: Yes. It wasn't bad; there wasn't too many sick guys. We was getting a lot of . you'd call it scurvy, I guess. It was pustules and jock itch and a lot of that stuff. The Australians had a acetylsalicylic acid and alcohol; it's the first time I'd seen this. I cured everybody there with it. Like, I'd had athlete's foot since I'd played football in school, and I've never had it since. That's the best stuff. You'd nearly pass out when you'd put it on there because it hurt so bad. We had a lot of that, and that was due to the food more than anything else.

Marcello: Were the shower and bathing facilities adequate here at Changi?

Douglas: Yes. It was a big area. There was a lot of vacant barracks, and you could roam around up in those. I found a table and some chairs up in one of them and

brought them to our area and started a poker game. I'd ran across a British sergeant major at the hospital that had got some cards--brand new cards--through this Red Cross deal. It was supposed to be for the patients. I'd got some money from someplace, but, anyway, I bought them pretty cheap off of him and came back to the barracks--everybody's cards was wore out--and started a poker game. It ran twenty-four hours a day--penny ante poker game. That's the first time I acquired any money. When I left there, I had sixty or eighty dollars in my pocket and was getting paid a dime a day, but I had made some money in that poker game.

Marcello: The Japanese were paying you here at Changi?

Douglas: Yes. Well, I think they started in Batavia paying us a dime. We finally got up to a quarter; that's what we was getting when the war ended.

Marcello: This was in occupation money, of course.

Douglas: Yes, but that's all that'd spend. A hundred-dollar American bill wasn't worth a thing. In fact, back to Serang, I seen twenty-dollar American bills sell for a dime--guilder--to those Dutch buying them. You couldn't spend the American money; it was no good to you at all.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were here in Changi for about three months. Were you kind of glad to leave?

Douglas: Well, on the food, yes, I guess we was glad to leave because of the food. And I wasn't in a way either, because to get away from those Japs was . I guess the bad food . I don't know. It was good not to be around the Japs, and it was bad not to get any food.

In fact, they kidded me about catching a monkey. The officers lived down the hill, and they had an iron garbage can over by the barbed wire entanglement that they'd dump their rice they didn't eat in. We had a little asphalt road and a grove of trees and the ocean, and there was literally thousands of monkeys in those trees. They'd come across, and I'd watch them eat in that garbage can. So I got me a rope, put it around the top of that garbage can, and trailed it back over behind the officers' hut. It was a two-story hut, and they was all watching me. But I didn't think to put it through the iron handle. So sure enough, here comes a monkey, and I jerked on that rope, and I got him right around the waist and pulled him toward me. Instead of him pulling back like a dog, he just run toward me and let the loop loosen up and hopped out and went away. They hollered down, "Doug, put it through that handle," so I went and put it through the handle. But he'd went and told all them other monkeys, because I never did get another one to come back (laughter).

So after this, we made us some slingshots. They'd come over, and we had a lot of big trees around the area. I bet you we knocked twelve or fifteen of them out of those trees--somebody had some cages they'd got somewhere--threw them in the cages. "We're going to eat them." They're boiling the Y-johns and hot water up, and we're going to kill those monkeys and eat them.

Well, I was about to chicken out. There was one old mother monkey and her little old baby, and her nose was bleeding where somebody had hit her with a rock. The little old baby was holding to her and was scared.

Captain Taylor came up there and said, "I'm giving you an order to turn them loose . . . too much like a human being! We're not going to eat monkeys at this stage!" So we turned them loose. I was kind of glad (chuckle).

Marcello: But were you at the point, in terms of the food situation, that you were ready to eat dogs, cats, monkeys, and things of that nature?

Douglas: Yes. Well, that's the first time I ate dog, was right there. Frank Fujita, who was part-Japanese, he brought me some barbecued dog or cooked dog up to the sick call place one day, and that was my first experience.

Marcello: Did he tell you what it was before you ate it?

Douglas: Yes, and I ate it. I ate it several times after that. He'd been talking about eating it, and I said, "Well, just bring me some next time you get one," so he did.

Marcello: We're talking about animals, and there's something that came up in my interview with Crayton Gordon that I need to ask you about. He remembers one of the officers in Bicycle Camp having a pet cockatoo. Do you remember anything at all about that?

Douglas: No, he's talked to me and asked me did I remember it, but I don't remember it. Of course, there was cockatoos all over Java, and I'm sure it's the truth. But I don't remember it. Yes, he's told me several tales about that cockatoo (laughter). I can tell you one about a pet monkey we had later. It'll come later in the story.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you were in Changi for about three months, and then, of course, you're pulled out of Changi. Describe your next move and how it came about.

Douglas: Okay. They loaded us on trucks and took us to the train station in Singapore.

Marcello: Again, you had only short notice that you were going to leave.

Douglas: Yes, a day or two before. We'd been expecting to leave ever since we'd been there. We'd been told we wasn't going to stay very long.

Marcello: So this is no great shock to you when you leave.

Douglas: No. We load and go to the train station right in downtown Singapore. I got a big kick out of getting to see the town, you know, driving through the town. They put us on a train and took us all the way up, took us across the causeway--it'd been repaired; the British had blown this causeway originally--and all the way up the Malayan Peninsula and to Penang, outside of Penang, Malaya. They fed us at Kuala Lumpur; they fed us there. They fed us two or three times along the way. They loaded us on another ship similar to the other one. It was just identical.

Marcello: Was this train trip a rather routine affair? There was no hardship or anything?

Douglas: No. You wasn't allowed to get out of the . . . no, there wasn't any . . . it was no hardship other than they had you just crammed in those boxcars. You didn't have room to lay down. Heck, we'd take turns standing, and you just kind of laid on one another.

Marcello: How long did this trip take?

Douglas: I'd say about three days--two or three days, something like that. I may be wrong about that.

Marcello: Were these boxcars?

Douglas: Boxcars; those small boxcars.

- Marcello: Were you allowed to keep the doors open to get some fresh air and so on?
- Douglas: Yes, we kept the doors open. We had a guard to each boxcar, and he took up a . he had plenty of room. You couldn't get your foot on his bamboo mat or nothing, and everybody else was just crammed in there. If you went to the bathroom, you just hung your butt out the door. I don't remember it being that bad, because it wasn't that long. We made some other trips that was worse in boxcars, because, well, we was sicker later and all this. But it was a very uneventful trip, really. I don't remember any abusive treatment or anything.
- Marcello: Okay, so you get to Penang and you're loaded aboard another ship. I assume at this stage you're on your way to Moulmein, Burma.
- Douglas: Right.
- Marcello: You have no idea what you're going to do when you get to Burma.
- Douglas: Not the least.
- Marcello: Okay, describe what this ship was like.
- Douglas: Well, this is where we're bombed.
- Marcello: What was the ship itself like? Describe what the conditions were like aboard this ship.
- Douglas: Well, it was just like the other one. We was crammed in

those holds with just as many as they can get in the holds. It was no different from the first ship that we'd left Java on; it was just an old beat-up, slow-running ship. You're crammed in the hold, and they'd let a few guys out on topside at a time. It had an open hatch; if they'd closed that hatch, I don't guess we could have breathed in there at all.

So we're out about two days. It was either three or four B-24's that bombed us; they sunk the ship in front of us; they straddled us twice with bombs.

Marcello: Describe what this was like to come under this bombing attack.

Douglas: Oh, terrible!

Marcello: Were you down in the hold when it took place?

Douglas: Yes, I was in the hold with . . . me and Dr. Lumpkin and Raymond Reed and Jack Rogers was playing cards right next to the side of the ship. The reason I say this, I remember when they hollered, "There's planes!" and I laid my head over against the side of the ship. I had my mouth open to keep the concussion from busting my jaws. When the bomb hit, I heard it, "sh-sh-sh," and it went off. I know my mouth got full of dirt; that's the reason I remember my mouth being open--from the dust inside the ship.

So everybody made a run to come out of that hold.

Those Japs was lined up around there, and they would have started to kill. Captain Fowler, who's a retired colonel now, Ira Fowler, did one of the best jobs I ever seen anyone do for getting people under control. He jumped up on something and squalled at the top of his voice and got everybody under control. He said, "Settle down here! This won't get it!" or something to that effect, and he got everybody settled down.

They went to hollering for medics, and that's the only ones they'd let come out of the hold. What few guys was out of the hold, they run them back in--those that wasn't killed. So the four of us that'd been playing bridge was the doctor and the three of us medics. Well, we had them little armbands and we grabbed our aid bags, and they let us come out of the hold. There was wounded and dead all over that ship, plus from the other ship, of course, had sunk in front of us.

Marcello: Now were most of the wounded and dead on your ship Japanese, or were they prisoners?

Douglas: No, they was prisoners. Oh, there was a bunch of Japanese killed in those cabins; they had wooden cabins along the side. I went through that passageway, and I don't know how many was dead. They was all dead. It had blown them out. The bulk of the shrapnel had hit those wooden cabins.

Marcello: Now this bomb had not actually hit the ship as such, had it?

Douglas: No, they missed it. They hit one on each side, but the one on the starboard side hit the closest and knocked holes as big as your head in the side of the ship. But it killed every Jap in those cabins, I suppose, because it blew them all out in that passageway. Of course, most of our wounded and dead was at the back, and I go through that passageway. It was dark and I'm stumbling all over those guys and shaking them, and they was all dead as far as I could tell.

Marcello: Was this as scared as you had been up until this time?

Douglas: I guess (chuckle) it's pretty close, because I didn't see . . . you know, we was way out there; you couldn't see land. We was in the Bay of Bengal, and I don't know how far out we were. We was at least twelve or fifteen miles from land, and I think probably closer to fifty to a hundred miles.

Marcello: What was the reaction of the Japanese after all this took place?

Douglas: Well, they didn't mistreat us in that way. But they was just as shook up as we was. In fact, the next day we had two more scares. It was Japanese planes, and they started hollering and screaming and got everybody shook up. A poor Dutchman jumped off the ship.

Marcello: Now in the meantime, did your ship pick up survivors off

the one that was sunk?

Douglas: Yes. We turned around and went back and picked up survivors until dark.

Marcello: I guess that even made conditions worse on your ship, did it not?

Douglas: Oh, yes. It was so crowded that you couldn't hardly . . . it killed a lot of people on the other ship including a lot of Japs. They had a lot of Jap engineers on that ship. The funny thing about it, every Jap they pulled out of that water had that saber. He might just have his G-string on, but he had his saber. He'd hunt something to wipe that saber off, and he'd bow, you know, and thank you. It killed a lot of . . . and there was Dutch on the other ship; I don't think there was any British, Australians . . . no Americans. It was Australians and Americans on our ship, and I think some Hollanders was on our ship, also.

But anyway, it was a awful-looking sight. When I came back aft, there was a Dutchman--yes, there was Dutch on the ship, because he was a Dutchman--laying under the ladder. The right side of his head . . . his ear was gone and an inch off the side of his head was gone like you'd taken an axe. I whirled right around the ladder and looked at him, and I went on; there was a lot of other wounded

laying around. Later that night, we was stacking dead over to the side of the ship; I picked him up and he was alive. I found out later that I wasn't the only one that'd passed him up for dead. Dr. Lumpkin had passed him up for dead and also one of the other medics. But he lived--we was a couple of days getting into port--a couple of days after we got in there. But his brain . he had wood splinters in his brain, bone splinters. It was the damndest thing you ever seen for a man . he just laid, and after awhile he got to hollering, "Oh!" in Malayan. That's what he hollered for three or four days.

But anyway, I throwed my aid bag down there and dumped it out, and the Australians had already dumped some of their stuff out. I grabbed me a handful of bandages and a bottle of acriflavine or something similar and started giving first aid. One guy I got to--this comes in later--he had about three of his toes and part of his foot blown away--a Dutchman. He's hollering, and I bandaged him up. We had a little morphine at that time; I guess I gave him a shot of morphine. Well, anyway, I go on and later we're picking up survivors from the other ship, and a guy comes with part of his shoulder blade blown away. I wrapped him up, and I remember giving him a shot.

A year later I see those two guys, and they didn't know me from Adam. In Burma, they sent me back to the base camp to get medical supplies. Both these guys are crippled, and they was doing what they could do. This guy couldn't hardly use his arm, and this guy couldn't hardly use his foot. I got off the truck, and both of those guys recognized me. In that much pain now, I don't know how the hell they done it. But needless to say, that three or four days I spent at that camp where they'd been all the time, I ate real good. They was in "on the know" (chuckle).

Marcello: How many days out of Moulmein was it when this bombing attack took place?

Douglas: I think two.

Marcello: So in other words, you really weren't living in cramped quarters for too long a period.

Douglas: I think we was five days--four or five days--on the whole trip. I was on topside from that time on, because we was taking care of . . . God, I don't know how many wounded we had.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens now when you get into Moulmein? Pick up the story at that point.

Douglas: Okay. Oh, I can go back about this ship and tell you that we had a chief signalman named Blair on there that run into

the wooden toilet and signaled those planes with a flashlight. Now whether they picked it up or not, I don't know; they shoved off. The gun on the fantail had blown up and killed the Jap crew, and we had black smoke and explosions from those shells and things that was blowing up back there. So the planes might have just thought we was sinking, but, anyway, they shoved off.

Marcello: Well, you mentioned that this Blair signaled with a flashlight. Did this attack take place at night or early in the morning?

Douglas: Daytime. In the afternoon. I'd say about one or two o'clock in the afternoon.

Marcello: I was wondering how they could possibly see the flashlight.

Douglas: Well, I guess you could spot it in . . . I assume . . . I really feel they didn't see it. But he did try. He run on the bridge and tried to get them to let him signal before they ever made their first run, and they wouldn't let him. Then I understand that he got a flashlight from somebody and tried to signal them. I think they thought the ship was sinking. Or they might have run out of bombs, because we ran into some ships that night where a whole bunch of ships had been sunk. Part of them was in shallow water, because there was part of them sticking out of the water. So we thought, possibly, that they just swung out and saw us.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens now when you get to Moulmein?

Douglas: Okay, they put us in a kind of a monastery-type deal there. We stayed . I'm not too clear about this.

Marcello: Now you were not in the leper asylum here at Moulmein, were you?

Douglas: Well, I understand that it had been used as a leper . part of it or something, but we didn't know it at the time. If we did, I didn't know anything about it. We didn't stay there but a few days, and I'm not too clear how long we did stay. We wasn't working, I remember that. Well, I was taking care of the sick, but, I mean, there wasn't no big working deal. That's where this guy passed away. I know we stayed there more than two or three days, because he lived two days.

Marcello: And were you not put in cells and so on here at Moulmein, also?

Douglas: No, these was big barracks-type deals. We slept out on the veranda where we had the sick.

Marcello: Again, this is simply another transit station, and you don't stay there too long, like you mentioned.

Douglas: No, we was just there a few days. We might have been there a week, but it don't seem to me like we was there but about three or four days.

Marcello: Did you do anything while you were there?

Douglas: Nothing other than take care of the sick, that's all. I don't think the troops did any work.

Marcello: Did the Japanese harass you at all here?

Douglas: No, not that I remember. Now up to this point, they'd been slapping you and knocking you around at just any given point. So they might have been doing some of that there and I just don't remember it.

Marcello: By this time, it's becoming kind of routine (chuckle), so to speak.

Douglas: (Chuckle) Yes, you just got to where you didn't pay that much attention to it.

Marcello: Now you mentioned you're only at Moulmein for a couple of days, and then once more you move. Pick up the story at that point.

Douglas: Okay. We walked to 18 Kilo Camp. We stayed there . . . let's see

Marcello: Now where was Thanbyuzayat?

Douglas: Thanbyuzayat, I never was in. It was a base camp that was, as I understand, between Moulmein and the 18 Kilo Camp. I guess it was number one camp, it'd probably be.

Marcello: I see. You went up to the 18 Kilo Camp.

Douglas: The first camp from Moulmein.

Marcello: Now by this time, I assume you know that you're going to be building a railroad.

Douglas: Yes, that's when it dawned on us.

Marcello: Now when you hit 18 Kilo Camp or before you leave Moulmein, do the Japanese give you any sort of an orientation or anything of that nature as to what you're going to be doing and why you're going to be doing it and anything of that sort?

Douglas: No, they did that in 18 Kilo.

Marcello: Okay, what happens when you get to 18 Kilo?

Douglas: Well, we're there I don't know . . . it's the first day or the second day. It might have been the first day-- it seems to me like it was--and this Colonel Nagatomo gave his little speech. I've got a copy of his speech here someplace. Anyway, he said he was going to build that railroad if it took a man for every crosstie, and we was there for the Japanese government to help the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, "blah-blah-blah." I don't know what all he had to say, but he gave quite a long speech. That must have been the first day, because he said, "Take the rest of the day off, and we start tomorrow."

Marcello: Now what was this 18 Kilo Camp like from a physical standpoint?

Douglas: Well, it was just a dusty, dirty camp with dirt floors, bamboo huts, open sides. It just was like the rest of them through Burma.

Marcello: How big is it in terms of the number of people here?

Douglas: I imagine there was about 3,000 guys there, and I'd say there were probably ten or fifteen long buildings, bamboo buildings . . . maybe more; I'm not sure. It's not as large as some of the camps I was in.

Marcello: I assume that 18 Kilo had been prepared for you when you arrived.

Douglas: Yes. I'm sure there'd been other troops there. Of course, there was troops there when we got there. We didn't move in it just "cold-turkey." We was right by the road. I can remember everytime a truck passed that you couldn't see for the dust; that was before the rainy season.

Marcello: What was the terrain like here at 18 Kilo Camp?

Douglas: It was right at the foot of some mountains. It was about three miles over there to take a bath. We used to walk back over right at the foot of these mountains, and it has a beautiful little spring, and they let you take a bath.

They started working, and, well, when they'd finish their work . . . they'd give them so much dirt to move, and they'd get'out there and do it real fast.

Marcello: Well, let's back up here a minute and talk more about the terrain. Are we talking about level terrain or hilly terrain? What sort of terrain are you working in at this stage of the railroad?

Douglas: It's small hilly terrain, I'd say, and a brush jungle.
It wasn't into the big trees.

Marcello: When we refer to these various kilo camps, we're referring to the number of kilometers that they were located from the base camp. Assuming that Thanbyuzayat was the base camp, 18 Kilo Camp would probably have been 18 kilometers from Thanbyuzayat.

Douglas: That's what I would assume. I don't know for sure, but I think that's probably the way they counted them out.

Marcello: Okay, now then let us describe the work that was taking place here at 18 Kilo Camp.

Douglas: It was pick-and-shovel--moving the dirt. We had so much dirt to move every day--cuts and draws through there. Now I never worked on the railroad; I took care of the sick. We'll go back to that.

When we hit there, there was seventeen medics and one doctor. They'd only allow three medics, and I just outranked those guys and then had a little more schooling and background. They sent fourteen of the medics out there, and I believe eight of the fourteen died before we finished the Burma deal.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that the people that were working on the railbed itself were mainly making cuts and fills at this point, so to speak.

Douglas: Yes.

Marcello: And you mentioned that they had a quota of dirt to move.

Douglas: Each man, yes.

Marcello: Pick up this aspect of the work from what you know, since you were obviously not a part of it.

Douglas: Well, they'd give so much . . . at this stage, there wasn't too many sick guys. Okay, they could move it. Like, they'd take a kumi, a company, and they'd give them . . . say, if they had a hundred men, they'd have so much dirt per man to move. Okay, well, that wasn't too . . . it was hard enough work, but they could move it easy enough. But later down the line when they'd--or there or anywhere or anywhere else--they'd allot so much to the company, if half of the men fell out sick, they still had to move that much dirt. That's what made it tough on them.

Marcello: But now you mentioned that when the work initially started, the men were completing their required amount of work relatively early in the day.

Douglas: Yes, before dark. They'd get in in time to go over and take a bath and come back.

Marcello: And then what did the Japanese do in response to this?

Douglas: You mean . . . I don't understand what you mean.

Marcello: Well, these guys evidently were completing their work in a very short amount of time.

Douglas: Oh, they was adding more to them.

Marcello: So the Japanese, in other words, simply increased the quota.

Douglas: That's right. They just kept on increasing it a little bit each day. Later it got to where they couldn't have done the first quota in any reasonable time.

Marcello: Describe what the hospital facilities were like here at the 18 Kilo Camp.

Douglas: Well, it was just like the barracks--just exactly--only a place to isolate the sick. That's where they began to weed them out. You had to be pretty damn sick to get off the work detail, and you was allowed only so many sick men. Who in the hell can say how many's going to get sick? But you was only allowed so many according to your nationality group. We had about 400 Americans, and I think we was allowed thirteen.

Marcello: This is every day on the job that you were allowed no more than thirteen sick regardless of whether there were 130 sick.

Douglas: That's the way they tried to do it. If it run over that, they'd come down through there. They could understand a man having his arm wrapped up, but they couldn't understand a man running 105-degree temperature. They'd take him on back to work until he passed out or something and this type

of deal. But we hadn't run into malaria here--not yet.

Marcello: Who determined when a man was sick or incapacitated enough to remain off of work details?

Douglas: Well, the doctor supposedly determined it, but the Japs would come along and they determined it. He'd say, "This man's sick," and it got to a point where he had to try to pick out the--whatever he's allowed--the sickest of the sick. Lots of sick men had to go out, just had to work.

Marcello: And what sort of a Japanese soldier is doing this? Is it an officer, or is it strictly one of the non-coms? Who is determining who among the sick are going to have to go out on work detail?

Douglas: One of the Jap sergeants or corporals or some of the people up in the office with Captain Fowler; he was kind of in charge of us. We was under a British colonel; Colonel Tharp was with us also, and Captain Fowler kind of run things. He'd argue and fuss and cuss with them along with the doctor, and they'd just decide whether you'd just go. If you could walk, you had to go.

Marcello: Okay, so let's assume we're talking about a typical day at the 18 Kilo Camp. The men get up in the morning, and I assume there would be a sick call.

Douglas: Yes.

Marcello: Now would the men who felt they were sick enough to remain off the job report over to the hospital?

Douglas: Before work call; before work call time.

Marcello: And then when they got to the hospital area, the doctors would determine who was and who was not sick enough to

Douglas: Pass their inspection. That's about the size of it.

Marcello: Okay. And then the Japanese would come around, and they would take some of those that the doctors had indicated were too sick to work.

Douglas: Yes, because there'd always be more than they thought he ought to have in. They'd come along and make their own diagnosis. Some guy that knew nothing whatsoever about it, he would make his diagnosis. He would just say who went and who didn't go.

Marcello: Could you ever get the Japanese guard to change his mind?

Douglas: Sometimes. They'd argue and fuss, and sometimes he'd allow another man or two to stay in and this type. But each man they'd go over by and say, "What's wrong with him? What's wrong with him?" If a guy couldn't walk, naturally they could understand that. But if a guy was sick from other reasons, they couldn't quite fathom that.

Marcello: And we're talking about a relatively uneducated man who was determining who can and who cannot work.

Douglas: That's right. He absolutely knew nothing about it and was

trying to tell a doctor who was sick and who wasn't sick.

Marcello: Now what sort of facilities did you have here at the hospital to care for the sick?

Douglas: Very little. We had plenty of quinine, because Java furnished two-thirds of the world's supply of quinine.

Marcello: And you're also pretty close to civilization at this point.

Douglas: Not far from Moulmein. Moulmein's a pretty good-sized town.

Marcello: And Thanbyuzayat's not too far away.

Douglas: Just eighteen kilos apparently, but I don't think it was much of a town. I don't know which one that was, but I assume it was just a village-type deal.

Marcello: And there is a road alongside the railroad where you can get supplies.

Douglas: Right. Well, we'd begun it. There was no railroad there at the time; they're just building it.

Marcello: Yes.

Douglas: Well, I'm trying to figure out how long we stayed there. We didn't stay there a month or two months maybe; I'm not sure about that.

Marcello: Well, at this stage, like you mentioned, the work was not too hard because you really weren't in the mountainous areas, and most of the men were still relatively healthy yet. So they would have probably finished this work earlier.

Douglas: That's the way it is. When they finished what they had them

allotted to do, they moved them up. We moved from there to 85 Kilo.

Marcello: You moved from the 18 Kilo up to the 85 Kilo.

Douglas: 85 Kilo.

Marcello: That was probably quite a drastic change, was it not?

Douglas: Yes, we was into the mountainous area--big trees, thick jungles.

Marcello: Now had the "Speedo" campaign started at this point? According to my records, it started sometime around May of 1943.

Douglas: I don't remember what month we went up there. We arrived in Burma in January, so we might have stayed at . . . do you know when the rainy season started?

Marcello: Well, it begins around this time, because the monsoon season and "Speedo" campaign more or less coincided.

Douglas: Well, yes, I understand that. Okay, I can give you a fairly good guess, because we didn't have the rainy season in the 85 Kilo Camp. They moved us back to 80 Kilo, and we didn't have it there. It started just as we was leaving 80 Kilo, because we walked all night in the rain.

Marcello: Okay, what was work like at the 80 and 85 Kilo Camps?

Douglas: It got tougher and tougher. They kept adding to them, adding to them. They'd go out earlier, and it took them later. More sickness, more sickness. At 85 Kilo, we only stayed a short time. They moved us back to 80 Kilo, and

that's where malaria hit us.

Marcello: Okay, was this the biggest problem that you had in terms of outbreaks of illness and sickness?

Douglas: At that time, yes. Malaria got just nearly everybody in camp down.

Marcello: What do you do for people that have malaria?

Douglas: Quinine.

Marcello: And there is plenty of quinine available.

Douglas: We had plenty of quinine, yes. So when it first hit, Dr. Lumpkin had never seen it before; I'd never seen it; none of us had ever seen it. Of course, the Dutch doctors had seen it, but we didn't have any Dutch doctors with us at the time. We asked Dr. Lumpkin, "Don't you think this is malaria?" and he said, "No." He didn't think it was. He thought it was something else. But we did a post mortem on a guy named White that died, and his spleen was bigger than a football. Normally, it's about the size of a baseball. When he saw his spleen, he said, "Yes, I've been wrong. This is malaria." We started to giving quinine and got most people back on their feet.

You know, you'd have malaria attacks about every ten days or two weeks. Some guys had it all the time, but, of course, they didn't do what they was told to do. When I had mine, I'd just wrap up in everything I could get to

wrap up in and stay wrapped up in it until I sweated my fever down to normal. I'd be weak, but that was the best way to handle it. You couldn't get some of the guys to do that, and, of course, some of them had to work with it. Nearly all of them had to work with it until they passed out. But right there at 80 Kilo was when the malaria hit us, and, of course, we had dysentery all the time.

Marcello: What do you do for dysentery at this point?

Douglas: The only treatment that we ever had for it there was that you either faded it or it killed you.

Marcello: You either faded it? What do you mean by that?

Douglas: I mean you lived over it or it killed you. And we got a bunch of Epsom salts, and I don't know where that came from because . . . but we had several big sacks of it just like feed sacks. And we started giving small doses of Epsom salts every two or three hours, and it'd just clean them out, and that's the best way. But we finally run out of it. But that didn't cure them; that was just . . . it didn't take care of it. It's a germ, but it would kind of clean them out and slow them down on going to the bathroom so many times.

Marcello: What's the food like here at the 80 and 85 Kilo Camps?

Douglas: All the food in Burma was about the same. It was just rice and stew, they called it, but it was just a watery . . . they

had bamboo shoots, and they'd have . . . the Dutch would go out and pick . . . it looked like grass to me, but it was supposed to have some kind of vitamins or something in it . . . minerals. And occasionally you'd get a little bit of meat, and they'd throw it in the soup. And you'd get a mess kit of rice and a canteen cup of soup for over your rice or wherever you wanted it.

Marcello: And in terms of the physical layout, I assume that all these camps were virtually the same.

Douglas: Yes, there was no difference in them. Of course, now the "hell camp" we're not to yet, but the actual buildings and terrain and the living conditions were all the same--the environment.

Marcello: Now by the time you get to the 80 and 85 Kilo Camps, are your medical supplies beginning to dwindle?

Douglas: Yes, we didn't have nothing . . . very little to start with anyway, so we didn't have just . . . all the time we just had very little except quinine. We had plenty of quinine.

Marcello: And at this point, malaria is the biggest problem.

Douglas: Right. Well, after we determined what it was, we kind of got it under control. Tropical ulcers started on us here, also. Tropical ulcers became the biggest problem of all.

Marcello: Okay, now let's talk a little bit about the tropical ulcers. It's a rather gory thing, but I think it's an interesting

and important part of the life of the prisoners while they're working on this railroad. How did one of these tropical ulcers develop?

Douglas: Well, from just any little scratch. Most of them was on the legs. That didn't mean they had to be on the leg. We had them on the arms and hips. Just a little scratch on your leg may not even bring the blood--just a scratch--and you could nearly see it grow. This is after we get into the rainy season.

Marcello: Is the body not producing the antibodies to combat these cuts and scratches? I mean, you are suffering from all sorts of vitamin and dietary deficiencies.

Douglas: Yes, malnutrition. Yes, that's part of it. But it's an infection, and it's just a big open ulcer that just keeps growing in your body. Your malnutrition and your body chemistry is not enough to throw it off, and you got . . . we had no medicines at all--nothing--to treat it with. And it just . . . why, it just . . . you could nearly see it growing. And it didn't take a doctor to tell who was going to die and how long he had to live; it got down just that bad.

Marcello: How large would these tropical ulcers get?

Douglas: Well, the largest one that I ever saw visible was one this chief off the ship had. I forget his name. He had one up

his knee with both the tibia and fibula showing, and he had about an inch of outside flesh back here in the back of his leg; maggots was crawling out the bottom of his leg at his foot; all the tendons in his foot was showing. Now that was visible, but you can bet it was all the way up. Blood poisoning killed him.

Marcello: What type of folk remedies--I guess that's the best word to use--did you come up with to counter these ulcers?

Douglas: Well, the main thing we used was hot water. We set up these half-drums all set out at the huts and had fire watches, and they kept this water hot day and night. We'd just pour hot water on there to wash out that dead puss, but it wasn't very good. I'm sure it helped save quite a few lives, but as far as healing, it didn't do it.

Marcello: Did you witness cases where the prisoners would use maggots to try to eat away the dead flesh?

Douglas: I've done it!

Marcello: How would this work?

Douglas: It'll do it. It would . . . gosh, those guys can't hardly stand it. I've put maggots in them. You didn't have to do it most of the time, because flies would blow them and leave maggots. But we put maggots in them, and they won't eat nothing but the dead flesh. But most those guys can't stand it. Those maggots are eating just like . . . I've sat and

picked them out of guy's ulcers for hours. You can get hold one, and he'll hold one at the other end; they have a little suction cup on the end of that maggot. Big old fat maggots reach a quarter of an inch long. But if a guy could stand it, it would clean the dead flesh out, but most of them couldn't stand it.

Marcello: How many maggots would you put on one of these wounds?

Douglas: You don't have to put but just one or two, and they just get all through their leg.

Marcello: But I guess what I'm saying is, you had to remember how many you put on there because you have to take them out sooner or later, don't you?

Douglas: Yes, but they multiply. I don't know how in the hell . . . a fly lays them, and I know that there'd be so damn many in there that you could hardly find them. They'd get all in the tendons and everything, and you'd have a hard time picking them all out. They normally would get in them without you putting any in there. We tried everything in the world that we could think of. We even tried tea leaves--tannic acid from tea leaves--and we thought at first it was helping them. But we quit doing it; we decided it wasn't doing any good.

Marcello: Did you ever see cases where they would take a sharpened spoon and dig out that dead flesh?

Douglas: I did that.

Marcello: Describe how this would take place.

Douglas: Well, that's the only way we ever healed any of them. Well, I'll take that back. There might have been some of them healed up through just pouring hot water on without the scraping, but, see, we didn't do that until so many men had died--up in 100 Kilo.

This Colonel Coates, an Australian colonel, he was quite a man. He saved a lot of guys' lives by cutting their legs off early. But anyway, he developed this spoon deal, and we heard about it so we started it. But this is at the latter stage of the Burma deal before we did it. We took G.I. spoons down to as small as we could get and sharpened them. And I had a porcelain pan, and I just put it under that guy's leg, and somebody would hold him if he couldn't hold himself, and I'd scrape all that dead flesh out of there right down to around the bone.

Marcello: The pain must have been excruciating for those guys.

Douglas: Oh, it was terrible! It was terrible! Those guys, most of them, just had to be held; they'd stick a towel in their mouth; we had no anesthetic at this stage. It cured some guys that would have died without it. And that's the best method that we ever came up with.

Marcello: Did you use the charcoal for the people that had dysentery?

Douglas: I never did, as far as I know. Now that rings a bell about

somebody using this, but as far as I remember, we never did. I don't know why we didn't either, because it might have done some good.

Marcello: Do you recall any other types of folk remedies or folk medicines that you had to come up with to combat these various diseases in light of the fact that you didn't have any medical supplies and so on.

Douglas: Well, the water and the . hot water and the Epson salts deal for the dysentery. I don't remember using any other thing that I can think of, other than tea leaves. We tried that. No, I guess we'd have tried something if we could have thought of it.

Marcello: I'm sure that you probably saw cases where guys simply gave up and died.

Douglas: Oh, yes.

Marcello: How could you tell when a guy had given up?

Douglas: Well, he'd quit eating for one thing and just say, "I want to die." And we talked and shamed them. "Think of your mother! Think of your father! Think of your wife!" We tried every method we could think of. Once a guy gave up, he didn't have any chance; and once a guy quit eating, he didn't have any chance. And, of course, he didn't have enough to hardly sustain himself anyway. So we just had lots of that--lots of it. Just guys that well, it was

a very disheartening thing. Everybody looked like he was going to die there at 100 Kilo, and it was just . . . those guys would get so damn sick they just didn't care. They didn't . . . they'd work sixteen, eighteen hours and the guy next to him would be dead the next morning and this type of deal. So, hell, it was just . . . morale was so bad, so low. Goddamn, it was a . . . "dog-eat-dog" situation, although we didn't have . . . guys kind of had to look after hisself without stepping on someone else. We didn't have none of that--very little of it, anyhow.

Marcello: Okay, this kind of brings us up to the 100 Kilo Camp, and as you mentioned it's the real hell hole of this whole experience, that is, if one camp was worse than another.

Douglas: It was. There's no doubt in my mind. I asked Captain Fowler if he, in his opinion, thought that 100 Kilo was as bad as any Jap prison camp, and he said in his opinion it was the worst. And he's been contacted, I think, about other camps. Particularly the War Crimes Commission, I think, contacted him on guards and stuff like that.

Marcello: Okay, now by this time, as we mentioned previously in the interview, the so-called "Speedo" campaign had begun, and it just happened to coincide with the monsoon season. Now when we speak about the "Speedo" campaign, we mean that the pace of work on the railroad was accelerated. The Japanese

were behind schedule.

Douglas: Yes, that's right. I guess it began when the rainy season started. I know that they was behind on the schedule, and just what period that was in there, I don't know. It seems to me like it was after we was at 100 Kilo.

Marcello: That could be. Like I say, the "Speedo" campaign started in May of 1943. Now how did things change when the "Speedo" campaign was initiated?

Douglas: Well, they couldn't have got any worse, I don't believe, because that was when there was no days off, no time off. A guy might get out of work by passing out, and they might put cigarette butts out on him or kick him or whatever. And they was just dying just like flies. Dr. Lumpkin died. We didn't have a doctor for a while.

Marcello: What sort of a blow was this to morale when Dr. Lumpkin died?

Douglas: A helluva blow! One helluva blow! It just . . . it liked to cause . . . I'm sure it caused the deaths of quite a few people, because the camp morale was bad enough. But he had stressed on us, he said, "Watch them men; prowl those huts! Don't let anybody die in the hut!" Until he died, there hadn't been a man die in a hut. And the next day it started. God, it mushroomed from there on!

Marcello: In other words, it was probably a psychological thing. Dr. Lumpkin himself did not have very much to work with in

the hospital.

Douglas: No more than I had. You know, I could do as much as he could do with what he had to do it with.

Marcello: But the fact that he was a doctor and you were a medic made a helluva lot of difference to the prisoners.

Douglas: That's right. And he knew that. He had enough sense to know that if they started dying in them huts . which he was right. When they started, my God, there was more who died in the huts than there was dying in the hospital. And it was for months that every man that went in that hospital died. It was just like a death sentence when they said, "We've got to put you in the hospital." Those guys would just . oh, they didn't want to go, because it was just like sentencing them to death to be put in that hospital hut. The hospital was no different from the other one. It was mud that deep (gesture), and we isolated the sick. It was a stinking, dirty, crappy place. I lived in the front of the hut.

Marcello: Now approximately how many people could the hospital hut hold?

Douglas: Our quota, like I said, if I'm not mistaken, was thirteen.

Marcello: Still at 100 Kilo Camp, it was thirteen.

Douglas: That's right. And the Australians and the Americans had ours together, and the Dutch had theirs together. They had half of the hut because of the number of Dutch in the camp, and

we had the other half of the hut. The Australians were on one side and us on the other; we was all worked in together. If I'm not mistaken, it was thirteen spaces that we was allowed in there.

Marcello: Even considering the death rate and so on, the quota was still thirteen here at 100 Kilo Camp?

Douglas: Yes, that's the only space you had. The rest of them you treated in the huts. When they began to die in the huts, why, you just there was a lot more guys in the huts to treat than there was in the hospital.

Marcello: Oh, I see. In other words, there were more than thirteen that were sick enough to be kept off detail.

Douglas: Oh, yes. After they got past going to the hospital, oh, yes. But we managed, until Lumpkin died, to weed the ones out that was going to die.

Marcello: And you got those over to the hospital.

Douglas: Yes. And he died. How crazy it is, you know. He and I came down with dysentery the same day, and we was probably the last two guys to get dysentery. How we'd got by that long, I don't know. Heck, I was just young and healthy, you know. I had it ten times worse than he did the first couple of days. Mine got better and his got worse and killed him in eight days.

Marcello: Were you caring for Dr. Lumpkin during this period?

Douglas: No. Dr. Lumpkin stayed over where the officers lived. When

he got down to where he was just so bad he couldn't work, why, he just stayed over there until they brought him to the hospital hut the last day or two that he lived, but he was too far gone then. I didn't realize he was that bad. I'd see him every night, and I was just shitting like a pet coon.

I'd go talk to him through his mosquito net, and I couldn't tell he was in that bad a shape until I pulled him out from under that mosquito net, and, good God, he'd just dwindled away to nothing nearly. He was treating himself, or he wasn't taking care of himself like he'd told others to take care of themselves.

Marcello: It's rather ironic that a doctor wasn't giving himself as good a care as what he had been giving to the other prisoners.

Douglas: That's right. Yes, it really is. It was a helluva blow.

Marcello: Did you have to participate in any of the burial details here at 100 Kilo?

Douglas: Yes. Yes, we buried them across the railroad track there. They wouldn't let enough men off of the work party a lot of times, and we'd have to bury them.

Marcello: Now were these men buried in mass graves, or were there individual graves?

Douglas: Individual graves. Now I'm not sure with all of them, but

the majority of them had teakwood crosses. They had somebody making those teakwood crosses, which was . . . you know, that's good hard wood. We burnt teakwood in our fireplaces. I don't know whether I don't think all of them was marked. I don't think they had enough time to make all of the grave markers, but they did make quite a few.

Marcello: Were there records being kept, however, of the deaths and the location of the burial sites and so on?

Douglas: I brought them out. I went back and dug them up after the war. I've got a map here . . . I don't know where it is; I'd like for you to see it. It's a little old map where we went back to Tamarkan which the "Bridge on the River Kwae," the movie was made about. I dug those up after the war and brought them out and turned them over to them in Calcutta-- maps of graveyards and the medical records. You wasn't supposed to keep any kind of records. Any records you kept, you slipped by them Japs, because you wasn't supposed to keep any kind of records. But we kept a slipshod type of record--who died and when and where and this type of stuff.

Marcello: By the time you get to the 80 Kilo Camp, is it safe to say that that hospital building was so bad the Japanese stayed away from it?

Douglas: No, they'd come in there. They'd come down through there

and whip the patients, whip us. No, about the only time they didn't bother us was before Dr. Lumpkin died. If he had time, he did a post mortem on anybody that he had time to. He was so busy he didn't have time to do it on all of them. I helped him . . . not on all of them but on quite a few of them. We rigged up a little old bamboo wall out there behind or kind of at the side of the hospital hut with a bamboo bench about so-high (gesture). That's where we'd do the post mortem. Them Jap guards would pass, and that's the only time we didn't have to salute them. We'd have the guys cut open, and there's a brain out or whatever. That's the only time I didn't have to bow to them little bastards (chuckle). But, no, they'd come down through the hospital huts and beat us. I don't know I'm sure you've heard of a little man named Hitahara.

Marcello: Yes. I think I have.

Douglas: An interpreter; he was a Korean. He came in there one day, slapped us around, so we all jumped to attention up there. He was drunk. It was one of their holidays or something, and they'd give them some sake. He went down through that hospital hut beating those guys--there wasn't a man there that could stand up--and punching them in their ulcers with that jagged bamboo stick and this type of stuff, you know. I remember this. He could speak perfect English--educated--

and him being that kind of man.

When those people talked to me in Calcutta--FBI or whoever the hell it was--they set their desk up there, and they said, "Go talk to them if you got anything to say." I went out there one day and talked to this one guy, and I said, "The first guy I want to tell you about is Hitahara." He said, "Douglas, if you don't want to talk about him, I've got enough to hang him twenty times anyway." (chuckle) Everybody had talked about him. He was a sadistic guy.

Marcello: I am assuming that by this time, you began to have nicknames for the guards, too.

Douglas: Yes.

Marcello: Can you recall some of the nicknames?

Douglas: Yes. "Louver Lips" and "Machine Gun Kelly." "Magen"--that was a Dutchword for eating--he was the Jap cook. Oh, they had all kinds of nicknames.

Marcello: How'd "Machine Gun Kelly" get his name?

Douglas: He killed an Australian down . . . it wasn't in our camp; it was down the line. He'd tried to rape this Australian, young kid, that went off in the bush to take a crap. That's what they determined later. He fought him, and he shot him in the back. They brought him into camp, and he tried to say he was escaping. They distracted the Jap long enough, and somebody raised him up, and they could see the bullet

holes in his back.

Marcello: Now by the time you get to 100 Kilo Camp, the rations have gotten very, very short, too, have they not?

Douglas: Yes, yes, because of the road. They was having a hard time. They couldn't get those British lorries up there (chuckle).

Marcello: I am to assume, though, am I not, that the Japanese were still eating better than the prisoners?

Douglas: Oh, yes. Well, they was eating pretty close to the same thing, I guess, that we were, but they was just getting more of it. Like vegetables, they'd take the majority of them. Like, they'd send a couple of cows up there, and they'd take nearly all. They gave us two pounds for 3,000 guys or three pounds and stuff like that. They got to going out at 100 Kilo and stealing the natives' oxen and killing them. We had an old boy from Wichita Falls named Jones; he was the butcher. They let him . . . he didn't have to work on the road.

Marcello: Now when you say "they" went out and stole these oxen, the Japanese guards were doing this.

Douglas: The Jap guards. They'd take Jones and they'd go out, and they'd spot one of these natives that was off from his oxen out there grazing or something. That jungle's thick, of course, and they'd just lead him off out there and kill him and skin him and bring the meat in the camp. The old

native would come hunting his oxen; they'd just beat the hell out of him for accusing them of stealing (chuckle). Old "Butch" Jones, we got him to get the blood from the hog or whatever, and then we'd congeal that and give it to the patients . . . congeal it and then slice it and fry it.

Marcello: How did you go about supplementing your diet here at 100 Kilo Camp?

Douglas: There wasn't any way to supplement it there. You just well, there just wasn't anyway to do it.

Marcello: Were there any jungle animals that you could hunt down or anything? I'm referring to snakes and things of that nature.

Douglas: Oh, well, we did eat some snakes, yes. Yes, we ate several pythons there. One got in the hospital hut up in the roof, half inside and half outside when they spotted him. It was nearly dark, and they went and got a Jap guard and tried to get him to shoot him. He said, no, because it had already got dark. He said to put a watch on him all night, and they'd shoot him the next morning. But he wiggled out, and they knocked him off the bamboos and killed him and skinned him and ate him. But they killed several in different camps, even up into Thailand.

Marcello: Now by the time you're getting up to the 100 Kilo Camp, are the native traders and so on able to follow the camps? I

am correct, am I not, in saying that native traders did follow some of the early camps?

Douglas: That's right. They was around close to some of those working parties; some of those guys could trade. But their food supply wasn't much, either. But occasionally those guys'd get some bananas, and occasionally I'd get a banana or something, but I didn't really have any opportunity to trade with them.

Marcello: Some of the guys brought in some of the so-called "wog" tobacco, also, did they not?

Douglas: Oh, yes, we could buy that. You could get that. I don't remember who the hell we was buying that off of, but you could always . it took a month's pay to buy a caddy of that tobacco (chuckle). It was a thing about like this (gesture). I'd have to wash mine; it was about as black as that (gesture). I'd wash mine several times so you could get to where you could look at it and tell whether you was able to smoke it.

Marcello: In other words, it would be a plug of black tobacco, maybe about a foot long and six inches high or something like that.

Douglas: About like that, only it was loose like the old Bugler tobacco used to be . . . stringy. I brought some of that home to my dad, and I said, "Try some of this." He'd always smoked Prince Albert. I had a little old leather pouch. He

couldn't smoke it.

Marcello: Was there an outbreak of cholera somewhere down the road or someplace?

Douglas: 100 Kilo.

Marcello: While you were there?

Douglas: Yes.

Marcello: Describe this.

Douglas: Well, it hit . . . the first case hit a guy named Wickerson; he was a hair-lipped Englishman and a good friend of mine. He was in the hospital with, I believe, tropical ulcers. He slept about three bunks down from where we slept, and he was dead before daylight. It hit him about midnight and killed him in about four hours or five hours.

Marcello: Evidently, cholera just struck fear into everybody's heart.

Douglas: Oh, my God, yes! We lost eight or ten guys, if I'm not mistaken, that day. But they run a bunch of Jap medics in there with white coats on and masks and headpieces. They had tanks on their back like you'd spray fruit trees, and it was phenol. They sprayed all over camp, and apparently it got it. That day those people died. We did a post mortem on Wickerson and Dr. Lumpkin went to the Jap hut and told them that it was cholera. I bet you Wickerson had lost forty or fifty pounds in that four or five hours; it just completely dehydrated his body. His intestines was just all shriveled

up and stuck together like an inner tube. That's when he knew it was cholera.

Marcello: Is it not true that they normally had to burn those cholera victims?

Douglas: Well, they didn't these. But I understand that in some of the native camps that they wiped the whole camps out back down the road, and they did. They set up incinerators, so I was told, and burned them--all of them. They just let them all die; they didn't have no medical treatment at all.

Marcello: In situations like you saw here at the 100 Kilo Camp, did men become more religious?

Douglas: I think so. Yes, including me. I talked to God a little more. If you'd let yourself dwell in it, you couldn't . . . I don't think you could go overboard on it, because you had enough to take care of without that. I'm not knocking religion because I prayed to Him plenty. But I think so. They certainly was closer to Him than probably any other time in their life.

Marcello: What is the thought that's most constantly on your mind during this period?

Douglas: Just survival. Just like I said, you live from day-to-day and try to not worry about tomorrow. We laughed and giggled a lot when probably you shouldn't have--just trying to get it off your mind, I guess. We'd try to tell

jokes or laugh and try to lift the patients' spirits and try to keep something going that wasn't just awful dreary. I don't know, it seemed like that all us medics was laughing more than we should instead of crying, I guess.

Marcello: How much thought are you giving to food?

Douglas: You try to not think about it. It was very easy to think about it. I seen several fights over guys talking about food. "I don't want to listen to that," you know. You'd just try to not talk about it. It's sure easy to talk about your mother's Sunday table (chuckle).

Marcello: Do you talk about various menus and things of this sort and recipes?

Douglas: They'd do that. Yes, but it got to a point where you didn't want to listen to it, because you didn't want to think about it. We had one guy with us--he got commissioned after he got . . . I was trying to think of his name . . . Albers. He collected every menu he could ever think of from everybody. He'd write it down and write it down. I don't know what he ever did with them, but he wanted the menu of anything that you could think of, and he'd write it down.

But you tried . . . at least I tried to not think about home, and I tried to not think about food. All it did was just make you feel worse; it didn't help a damn bit.

Marcello: Without putting words in your mouth, would it be safe to say

that talk about women and sex received low priority as compared to food and so on and so forth?

Douglas: I don't know. That had a pretty high priority (chuckle). I think there was probably more about that than there was about the food, because you tried to stay away from that food business because you was really hurting for something good to eat. Oh, hell, yes, we was talking about . . . and you'd get to talking so foul. When I got home, I had a problem. You know, in front of my mother, I blurted out things that I wouldn't normally have said. I think that's true whether you was in prison camp or not--your association with some men.

Marcello: What condition was your clothing in by the time you were working out at the 100 Kilo Camp? Or is it not even accurate to talk about "clothing?"

Douglas: Well, everybody's clothing was bad by this time, even the Army guys that had brought it in and had all their gear.

Marcello: Are you down to G-strings for the most part?

Douglas: The most part. Everybody had a pair of shorts or two, you know . . . two or three pair of shorts. But you'd wear just a G-string or an old beat-up pair of shorts, and that was it . . . and go bare-footed all the time. What shoes that you had, you saved for those walks, because you nearly had to have something on those marches.

Marcello: Are there opportunities to bathe and so on?

Douglas: That was nearly always a problem. Of course, in the rainy season, there's plenty of water. But up until that time, it was a problem. Well, now in 80 Kilo, we had a creek running through there, and we'd bathe out of that creek. But other than the rainy season, there's a problem all the way--in Thailand and everywhere--on having enough water to bathe in.

As a medic . . . well, of course, that's getting ahead of it. After I get into Thailand, they was giving in the first camp they had one Dutch mess kit, which is about like a coffee can, twice a week for the troops to bathe in. I got one of them every day, because I had to take care of the sick. You can learn to bathe out of that and wash your shorts out of what's left (chuckle). Now, of course, at the camp at Tamarkan, there was a river right across the road, and they had two bathing parties a day. I was there a year, and I made two a day. I went over there with the camp people working the camp, and then when the workers got in, I lined up and went with them, too. It was just across the road. I'd just get out there, and, man, it felt real good just to cool off more than anything else. It was dusty and dirty.

Marcello: How do you substitute for toothpaste and toothbrushes?

Douglas: Well, that's another thing. Lots of guys lost their teeth,

and lots of people had teeth problems when they got home. I've got every one of mine. I had three small cavities in Calcutta that they filled. I've got five fillings the Navy put in for me when I was seventeen.

But I brushed my teeth everytime I'd think about it. I got hold of a toothbrush somewhere, and I used ashes; I got down to that. I had some bicarbonate of soda that I used a long time. I ran out of that, and since there's always fires, and I'd take those ashes and just mash them up in my hand and use that. I brushed my teeth everytime I'd think about it. I know that the diet and everything had a lot to do with it, but, also, keeping them clean had a lot to do with it. I know I saved mine; I've still got all of my teeth.

But I don't believe there's any way to describe how 100 Kilo was. It was so miserable, and it just looked like everybody was going to die. One more rainy season there would have killed everybody, in my opinion.

Marcello: In the rainy season, are you ever dry?

Douglas: No. You're damp, moldy. Your blankets are moldy. You just can't get nothing dry completely.

Marcello: Those huts don't keep out the rain.

Douglas: No, no. Even if you'd get somewhere where it didn't leak on you, everything's damp and moldy. Like, every morning

we'd take those shitty blankets that those guys had shit on--dysentery and blood and mucus--and me and an old boy, Bill Biffle, who lives up here at Gainesville now . . . he wasn't a medic, but he'd nearly died, and we kind of slipped him by and he worked as a medic. We'd take two or three loads of them shitty blankets with that blood and shit just dripping off of us down to a little old creek and wash them every morning. We'd bring them back and hang them around in huts with fires on each end of the huts to dry them out some, but you never got them real dry.

After I got back and my kid was born in '47--my daughter-- I couldn't even change her diaper without puking. I never got sick at my stomach then, because I guess I just had to do it.

Marcello: Are you getting any word from the outside at this time?

Douglas: No, none.

Marcello: Are you allowed to send out any messages and so on?

Douglas: Yes, I sent three cards while we were in Burma, and my mother got all three of them. I still have them here someplace.

Marcello: Now these were the cards that were more or less set up like a multiple choice form.

Douglas: Form-printed cards, yes.

Marcello: In other words, "my health is (a) excellent, (b) good, (c) fair, (d) poor," and you better say "excellent" or

"good," or it doesn't get out.

Douglas: Yes. "I'm being treated good" or "I'm being treated bad."
Well, you'd mark out the latter. I just wanted to sign it.
But, you know, we had guys that, when we first got to Burma
and when the first cards were to be sent out, wouldn't send
those cards. I thought they was crazy, because I wanted every
way in the world to let my folks know that I was alive. But
later I regretted sending them, because there was so many guys
that did send them that died. It was a two-shot deal to your
family. At first I thought they was crazy, but there was some
. mine worked out all right.

Marcello: Did you ever see any evidence of collaboration, where prisoners
would fraternize with the Japanese to get favors and things
of this sort?

Douglas: Oh, if you got friendly with them, normally they turned on
you. But as far as collaborating, we had none of that. As
far as I know, that was not like the Korean deal; I know
that they got a lot of problems there. If there was any of
that, I never heard of it. I just don't believe there was.

Marcello: I assume that the Japanese were fair game in terms of stealing
from them and things of that sort.

Douglas: Yes, every chance they got, they stole from them. Of course,
they got their heads half beat off when they got caught at
it. They got caught in their warehouses, and they'd steal

anything the Japs would lay down. In fact, there at 100 Kilo, old Dempsey Key and Bill York and Jack Kelm, I believe, who got caught in their warehouse, and they beat them for about three days over there in front of a guardhouse. Hell, they wasn't beat up something terrible, but they finally let us come get them and put them on stretchers and brought them back to the hospital hut. They just got off the stretchers and was dying laughing, and they was back in the warehouse that night. They didn't care.

Marcello: I'm not sure if you can answer my next comment or not, but I assume that we're talking about the scum of the Japanese army. There's no reason why the Japanese would put good soldiers in these camps to guard prisoners. That doesn't make sense to me.

Douglas: I'd never thought about that, but that's probably right. Well, I just don't know; I never really thought about that. I know the Koreans was the scum of the army.

This little Tatiyama that I got . . . he was the only one ever nice to me, and I was scared to even . . . I'd run from him and hide from him. He claimed to be a Christian and claimed to be raised in a Baptist convent in Korea. He used to tell me that it took five years to be in the Japanese army before you became a private--classed to the same level as a Japanese private--for a Korean.

But most cases where guys were friendly--overly friendly--with Jap guards, they wound up getting their heads nearly beat off.

Little Tatiyama used to bring me his cigarette ration. This was next to the last camp I was in. He said he wanted to come to the United States when the war was over and go to school, and he was as much a prisoner as I was. Apparently, it wasn't a hell of a lot of difference. But I was scared of him. He'd always say he wanted to take me and escape, and I'd say, "Yeah," but I wasn't about to go with him.

Marcello: Did the Japanese have their own medical facilities in these camps?

Douglas: No. If they got very sick, they took them back to their base camps. I'll tell you what happened to me at 100 Kilo. There was two of them that beat me for about an hour or hour-and-a-half over treating one of them for a earache. This was Christmas Eve of '43. That night before, one came in there and he had an earache. I treated him with whatever I had; I didn't have much. Then he came back the next night and wanted to know who had treated him. Well, what was funny to these buddies of mine was that I jumped up there, and I said that I had. Because if you'd treat one of them, sometimes they'd bring you some cigarettes or some native sugar or bananas, and I was scared somebody was going to beat me to

my goodies (chuckle).

He told me to follow him, and he went up on a hill by the hospital hut where he was relieving the guard. He talked to the guard a couple of minutes, and he turned around and they both started beating on me. This guy got behind me; the other one with a bamboo stick beat me up from the head all the way down. I just had a pair of shorts on. This guy beat me with his rifle, and he'd back off and run at me with that bayonet and scratch me in the belly with it. He'd beat me with his fist and this eye closed (gesture), and he kept beating me. A Dutch interpreter finally got up there and stopped it and talked them into quitting. Through him, they said I'd treated him rough and that I made him stand there and wait while I was treating a prisoner and that he was a great Japanese soldier.

Marcello: Also, do you think it was kind of a loss of face in that he had to come to you for treatment?

Douglas: That probably had something to do with it. I didn't deliberately treat him rough. He said I'd called him a son-of-a-bitch, and I didn't do that because they knew our cuss words by then. I think what he got mainly mad about was that he had to stand there and wait; I was treating some guys for something.

Marcello: Were you able to get up and walk away from this beating?

Douglas: He never knocked me down. That's one thing you had to keep in

mind when they was beating on you--to stand up if you could. Because with them old hobnail boots, they'd walk on you with them. This guy behind me nearly knocked me down, because I couldn't see him. This guy made me look at him, and he'd hit me in the bend of the legs, and I nearly went down two or three times. He'd knock me back; he'd knock me several steps back and made me come back up to him. I thought he was going to kill me. It was right by the hut, and that's what I was kidding Raymond Read about Saturday night. I said, "You dirty rat, you could have come up there and stopped him." (chuckle)

Well, when you'd get those beatings--everybody got them; I'm talking about from the colonel on down--instead of sympathizing with you, these guys would say, "Oh, well, that old boy has a good right cross, and he kicked at your nuts, but, by God, I thought that was kind of funny," you know. It made you feel a little better about it, because you're mad enough about it, anyway. So that was really the only beating, just continuous beating, I got the whole time. I figure I got out as lucky as anybody.

Marcello: Did you ever see people strike back at the Japanese? Did you ever see this take place?

Douglas: No. It was death; it's just that simple. Now I know that Lieutenant Stensland took a gun away from one at 30 Kilo or

somewhere down the line. He was with John Owen's group. He was beating a guy, and damn if he didn't . . . old Stensland, he was some kind of guy. He was a second lieutenant. He took that gun away from him and took it in to turn it over to the Jap sergeant, and they didn't kill him over it. That's the only instance I know of. Oh, he didn't hit the guard; he just took it away from him.

Marcello: I assume you were glad to get out of that 100 Kilo Camp.

Douglas: Whew! I left with the first group; I left with the sick.

Marcello: Where did you go?

Douglas: To Kanchanaburi in Thailand. Not by the bridge; we was about two miles from the bridge. We called it the "Mango Grove Camp." It never did have a name as far as I know. We stayed there about a couple or three weeks; then they moved us down to Tamarkan.

Marcello: Oh, you didn't spend too much time in Kanchanaburi?

Douglas: No, I was at Tamarkan. It's about three miles out of Kanchanaburi. This other little camp that I was first in is between there.

Marcello: I guess any camp had to be better than 100 Kilo.

Douglas: Oh, yes.

Marcello: That had to be the happiest day of your life as you look back upon it in terms of being a prisoner-of-war.

Douglas: Yes. See, after the rainy season ended in 100 Kilo, it

got a little better. The railroad was completed, and we brought some more medics off the road. They slacked up on the work a little bit, and it got a little better there. Of course, now the rainy season would have been the same damn thing. When they pulled that train up there and they loaded me on the car with a carload of sick--I had two dead out of the carload by the time I got there--and we pulled out. Then them other guys come on the next few days, and some of them went on up to other camps. Some of them went back into that damn jungle; after they went into Thailand, they took them back up in there. I have no idea why they went back up in there.

Marcello: What did you do when you got to the so-called "Mango" camp?

Douglas: Well, I just thought, "Man, this is all right." They had them mangos hanging all over those trees, and they said they was going to beat hell out of anybody that ate one of the mangos. But shit, there wasn't a mango left in two days (chuckle); we ate them all. But it wasn't bad. It was a brand new camp; I don't know who had built those huts. But it wasn't that bad, and it didn't seem like the sick had to work. But the best camp was Tamarkan.

Marcello: Okay, before we get to Tamarkan, let me ask you this. Is it not true that the Japanese had established some sort of an organization or designation for your group? Was it something

like H Force and Group 5 or something of that nature?

Douglas: Group 5. I think we was Group 5, and John Owen's bunch was Group 2, if I'm not mistaken. It was kind of like two separate armies. One group didn't borrow from the other group or didn't hardly mix with them until we got into Thailand.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that you get down to Tamarkan, and this is like heaven as compared to that hell up in the jungles.

Douglas: Yes.

Marcello: What made Tamarkan such a better place?

Douglas: Well, I understand that Tamarkan, during the time they're building the bridge . . . there are two bridges there--a steel bridge and a wooden bridge. I understand that building those bridges was just as bad as bad could be nearly. But when I got there, the bridges are built and the railroad is completed, and it's a huge camp. There's 10,000 or 12,000 or 15,000 in the camp. Hell, they had a theatre down at the end of the parade field. Sick men didn't have to work--of course, I was still taking care of the sick--and what work they was doing apparently wasn't that tough, because they'd get them in every day in time. I went to an Australian lieutenant working in headquarters, and I said, "We need to get some sports started." He said, "Well, what do you suggest?" I said, "I know a guy from Jacksboro

over here who tells me he can make soft balls and bats for us." Well, he never heard of it; he never seen a game of baseball or anything else. But I got Luther Prunty up here at Jacksboro to make them, and we started softball; we started basketball, badmitten, and even had track meets. They gave us the day off when we had a track meet. But this baseball and those sports got those guys off of their butts in that hospital and got their butts out there; they all wanted to play. We had 10,000 to 15,000 spectators there every game.

Marcello: This was a huge camp, was it not?

Douglas: Big camp, yes.

Marcello: What sort of work was being done here at Tamarkan?

Douglas: Well, they would do repair work. If they knocked the bridges out, well, they'd work on those getting them repaired, and then the B-24's would come back again.

Marcello: Was it mainly camp maintenance and so on here?

Douglas: Well, there was a lot of people in the camp maintenance, but they took them out on working parties. They had a goat party, and they took supplies up on the mountain up over the camp there to Japs. I don't know what . . . they was doing just whatever had to be done, but it wasn't nothing like the Burma work.

Marcello: What were your quarters like here at Tamarkan?

Douglas: The huts was a little better. They're still bamboo, dirt floor huts, but they seemed better to me. The whole situation seemed better to me.

Every Monday was a day off, and every Monday night they had a show--the theatre group. I got in with the theatre group in some little old bit parts, because every night this Australian mess sergeant would make some tea and some of that burnt rice and give it to the theatre group. If you wasn't in the group, you wasn't allowed in there. They had a bamboo deal around behind it, and they'd get in there and have a jam session and just "shoot the shit." It wasn't no alcohol involved. So I played some little old bit parts to get in with that group.

I started me a bingo game; I sat down and made a bingo set. I've always been real good at math. The Australians had a game called "housey-housey." It's five numbers on a card; it's the same thing as bingo. They must have had a dozen games going on and were charging ten cents a card, and they'd pay them a cash prize. Well, they just made what they wanted to make out of it. So I sat down one day, and I got me some cardboard from somewhere and made a set of forty-two cards without a duplication. I ran all of them out of business; they just lined up to play my game. I paid ten cents a space for those guys' spaces . . . to use

the space. Then this Australian was giving me the burnt oil that was to be thrown away, and I'd make my lamps; I'd take a can, mud, stick, and a rag wrapped around it. We'd play to lights out. I was making ten, fifteen dollars a night. (Chuckle) I got to be kind of a gangster around there . . . Al Capone around there.

But they got to stealing my cards. They'd steal one or two every night, and I'd get them back the next night, and they'd get two more. They got another two or three games going. I never was broke anymore after that.

Marcello: What was the hospital like here at Tamarkan? I assume you worked in the hospital again.

Douglas: Yes. It was much better. It was the same type of hut. There was about 150-yard-long huts, and in the center of it, you had where you kept your medicines and somebody slept there. Sickness wasn't as bad there.

Marcello: You were able to observe a marked improvement in the health of the people here.

Douglas: Oh, yes. We got out of that jungle. Of course, we got bombed there. They dropped those three bombs in the camp and killed, hell, a lot of guys. From that time on, we was all kind of bomb-happy, because they was in and around us every day.

Marcello: Okay, we'll talk about that in a minute, but let's get back

to the hospital facilities here. How was your own dysentery by this time?

Douglas: Dysentery had slowed down; it wasn't as bad. We had a hut-- one of those long huts--with just dysentery patients in it, but they was kind of the chronic ones with amoebic dysentery mostly.

Marcello: How about your own case?

Douglas: Well, I still had it, but, I mean, I didn't have it bad enough that I couldn't work. I'd go four, five, or six times a day, and then I had a couple of flare-ups.

Marcello: What were the guards like here at Tamarkan?

Douglas: They wasn't that bad. Oh, they'd still beat you and slap you around some, but it wasn't like it had been.

Marcello: I guess, without trying to be too sympathetic toward those guards in the jungle, they had an assignment, and I guess it was going to be hell to pay for them if they didn't do it in the allotted time.

Douglas: Yes, they was being pushed; there's no doubt about it.

Marcello: Again, that's in no way trying to rationalize their conduct and so on.

Douglas: Yes. Yes, when that "Speedo" campaign started, the shit hit the fan. I know they just speeded up, and nobody was off work.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that there were some bombing raids that

took place here at Tamarkan. Why don't you describe these.

Douglas: Okay. We're on tenko. That was eight o'clock at night, but it was light. Twenty-one of them . . . they'd been bombing around us all the time, but I wasn't worried about it. Because that was a huge open camp--there wasn't a dozen trees in camp--and I knew damn well they knew it was there. It never entered my mind that they'd harm that camp in any way. But they came out of the clouds, and they was kind of going away from the camp, and then they turned in formation towards the camp.

Marcello: Were these four-engine bombers?

Douglas: B-24's. Twenty-one of them. That British colonel up there with the Japs who was fixing to get the head count, well, he said, "Everybody disperse!" So everybody took off to the other end of the camp away from the bridge. If they was going to bomb, we knew that's what they was going to bomb. Well, I trotted along there at the first hut, and they had drainage ditches around the hut about so-deep (gesture), and I was standing in one of those. God Almighty! It looked like they dropped everything they had at me! I just fell down in there, and it threw dirt clear over there on me.

But they didn't even scratch the bridges; they completely missed both bridges. So they dropped three in the camp. The Japs pulled the--they had bamboo fence higher than this

ceiling around the camp--and they pulled up that bamboo and let us run out of camp. Of course, the bombers circled for another run. I later talked to a captain flying in one of those planes, and he said that they knew they'd hit the camp, and they had orders, if they hurt the camp, to go on. That was a secondary target, I guess.

Well, anyway, we come on back into camp--I don't think anybody . . . there wasn't no place to run off to--and went to digging those guys up. Most of the guys that was killed was buried. Those armor-piercing bombs had hit and gone way deep in the ground, and you could set this house in those holes. We'd dig them up by hand; we saved quite a few. It was amazing, really. Some of those guys came out of there . and we didn't even know mouth-to-mouth resuscitation in those days, but we brought some of them around.

Marcello: What were your reactions emotionally or psychologically to these air raids? On the one hand, I guess I can assume that you were fearful for your life; but on the other hand, it must have done something for your morale, too. This must have given you some indication that the war was turning in favor of the Allies.

Douglas: Well, we knew it had to come to get us out of there; that's the way most of us looked at it, although we was fearful of our lives. But in a way, we welcomed it because we knew that

something had to happen to get our ass out of there. I don't think I'm an individual in saying this--I always figured the troops would liberate us, and I knew that that wasn't going to be no picnic. So we was glad, in a way, to see it; and in a way, we wasn't.

Marcello: What was the reaction of the Japanese when these raids took place?

Douglas: Oh, they was screaming and hollering . . . well, they was confused, I guess, because they was being told they was winning the war all along. All of a sudden, they don't see no Japanese planes around; they see American planes. But actually, I expected worse treatment, but it didn't seem to change their treatment. It was bad, but it didn't seem to get any worse. They never would let nobody run out of the camp again.

What was funny, the next day, they gave a day off to dig air raid shelters. The Jap colonel was down there with Colonel Tharp and the British colonel, and, boy, they was putting them zig-zag trenches over in the far edge from that bridge. He made a remark through the interpreter that he'd never seen them guys work so fast (chuckle). They was putting them down. So that's what we'd do; we'd run to those shelters.

Marcello: How many raids did you have altogether here?

Douglas: Oh, gosh, I don't know . . . quite a few. See, after they

bombed like that and they seen they hit the camp, they never high-level bombed again. Well, one plane did one day by himself, and he missed the bridge. He dropped some bombs over there--missed it, didn't hit the camp.

Marcello: They brought in fighter-bombers after this?

Douglas: No. Still them B-24's is the only thing I ever saw. But here was a mountain (gesture), and there was a saddle in this mountain. So they'd circle around; you'd see them. We'd all be out there in them holes. They'd come over one behind the other through that saddle and come right down over the camp--you could see them guys--and at low level. They dropped delayed-action bombs, and that's the way they knocked out them bridges. Everytime they'd get them nearly built back, that's the way they'd come back.

Marcello: Evidently, they were bombing those bridges with impunity. The Japanese were not putting up very much resistance.

Douglas: No . . . well, they had some antiaircraft guns around there. I saw one plane hit in the belly with one, and he might have went down. He was smoking; he fell out of formation. They wasn't bombing at us. They was going on up to bomb Kanchanaburi or Bangkok or someplace. But he fell out of formation and headed on back toward India; now he may have fell. But that's the only one I ever seen them hit.

But one day . . . we used to talk about, "I wonder why

they don't knock them antiaircraft guns out," but I guess they'd been mapping them or taking pictures of them. One day they come over and knocked every goddamned one of them out in one day . one afternoon. They quieted every one of them down.

Marcello: Do the Japanese seem a little bit more mellow by this time? In other words, they must know that the war's changing, too.

Douglas: I don't think so. I mean, they might have known. The ones that had enough sense to really think it out surely knew. But I don't think the average one knew that they was losing the war. I think they was told right up to the end that they was winning the war.

Marcello: When did you leave Tamarkan?

Douglas: I stayed there about a year. I think I left there in January of '45.

Marcello: Okay, and where did you move from there?

Douglas: To out at Prachin Buri. We called it Cashew Mountain Camp, is what we named it, because there was a Cashew Mountain right--that was the name of it--right close to camp. We built two airfields where a lot of these guys was liberated from--those two airfields--that happened to be in the camp.

Marcello: How far was this approximately from Tamarkan?

Douglas: Well, we went to Bangkok by train and stayed at the docks--the "go-downs" there--for several days and loaded back on

trains and went south. It was the second largest city in Thailand--Prachin Buri--and we was about twenty miles out of Prachin Buri. We arrived there and built our camps. It wasn't nothing but brush country.

Marcello: Was this a large contingent that made this trip?

Douglas: Pretty good-sized. We had oh, I'd say there was probably 3,000 . . . 2,500 or 3,000.

Marcello: Did you hate to leave Tamarkan?

Douglas: No, they bombed us too much. We was glad to leave there. But as I look back on it, it's the best camp, I guess, I was in.

Marcello: Even better than Bicycle Camp?

Douglas: I think so, because you had more area and you could get out and walk . . . and we played baseball.

Marcello: Was the food pretty good there at Tamarkan?

Douglas: It wasn't bad. I mean, it wasn't good (chuckle), but it was better than what we'd had in Burma. On Christmas Day, we had a riceless day. They give us enough food that we didn't have to have rice that day. Hell, everybody got kind of sick at their stomach; we wasn't used to . . . they gave us meats and vegetables and stuff like that.

Marcello: But generally, up to that time, it was mainly all rice.

Douglas: It was rice. Your main thing all the way was rice three times a day and soup. But the soup got better there; they

got more vegetables, and they got more meat.

Marcello: Were there any opportunities to trade with the natives here at Tamarkan?

Douglas: Not for me. But every night there was just no telling how many guys slipped out of the camp and had regular trading rendezvous and slipped back in the camp before daylight. Oh, just lots and lots of them did that there. They'd trade and sell jewelry and whatever with the natives.

But they set up a canteen in this camp where you could . . . sometimes it didn't have anything in it; sometimes you could buy eggs or bananas or native sugar.

Marcello: Who ran this camp? The Japanese?

Douglas: No, some Australians. Somebody in the camp; I think it was Australians. Every Monday, we ran tournaments on this softball, and we'd play all day on Monday. We had to play the Japs a game of baseball every Monday. We had to do that; we was scared to refuse it, because they wouldn't let us play our games. I played second base on every game we ever played, and we beat the shit out of them! We'd have died before we'd let them beat us. But the first game we played them, well, we was scared to bump into them. Hell, you know, they'd slap you around at the least opportunity. But we found out that they'd lose face if they showed poor sportsmanship. We'd accidentally bump into them, and they'd

bow. Goddamn! We'd slide into first just anyway to get into them . . . run over them. Their colonel'd be sitting up there watching it. Everytime we played them, they'd bring a big bucket of cold--ice in it--lemonade. That's the only cold drink . . . no, that mess sergeant had an ice box up there; he used to let me put my canteen in it sometimes. But that ice cold sweet lemonade, boy, they'd let all the players have a cup of it, and that sure was good. They had a track meet one day.

Marcello: I assume, then, that you had picked up a sufficient amount of weight and had recovered enough that you were able to compete successfully against these Japanese.

Douglas: Oh, yes, yes. Oh, yes, we ran against them. That was something else--they didn't win an event. I won the fifty-yard dash (chuckle). They didn't know that we had some Australian professional track . . . I knew Garth Bond, who was a professional in the 220-yard dash.

Marcello: Okay, let's get back to Prachin Buri again, because you were building those airfields there. As you mentioned, you have to build the camp from scratch.

Douglas: Right.

Marcello: I assume it was a rather uneventful trip from Tamarkan to Prachin Buri.

Douglas: Yes. It wasn't any . . . well, we was in them yards in

Bangkok, and we was awful nervous, because they had blown down everything around there. We sat there for two or three days in those yards. Really, we didn't have no problems. We got to Prachin Buri, and we walked from there out to that camp and built the huts.

Then there came a big storm; I guess it was the edge of a typhoon. It blowed all the huts down; every damn one of them was blowed down! It didn't hurt anybody.

Marcello: By this time, you know how to build those native huts.

Douglas: Oh, hell, yes, we could do that. Hell, I didn't build any of them, but they could build them. They'd make the ties, you know, out of the bamboo and the atap, and they'd make the ties out of the strips of the bamboo. They'd put them up pretty good. Of course, they'd put the Japs' huts up first and then ours waited until last, but we finally got them all back up.

Marcello: How long did it take to put up one of those atap huts?

Douglas: Oh, a week. I'm sure they could have one of them up in a week. Of course, there's plenty of bamboo everywhere.

Marcello: In the meantime, are you sleeping out in the open and on the ground?

Douglas: Underneath . these huts were just blown down on the ground, and they kind of burrowed under those.

Marcello: But, I mean, while the camp was being constructed out there,

were you sleeping on the ground and so on?

Douglas: Yes, or just move over under the one that's just half
blowed down until a certain group moved back in. They
finally got it all back up.

You know, we'd been there about two or three months,
and an Australian was sick--malaria, I guess--and he wasn't
in the hospital hut; he was in a regular hut. He let the
damndest blood-curdling scream out. And a python had been
. this ant hill, we'd cut about a third of it away to
get it in line with the rest of the huts the same distance
apart, and that python had been laying there all that time
buried in that ant hill, bedded up in there. He woke up
and he was half-way across his knees. He let the damndest
scream out, and we all ran and jumped . . . if one guy'd run,
everybody'd run and jump in an air raid hole. We went off
down there, and when he jumped up, he kicked him off on the
aisle. He'd wiggled off under there, and we got some bamboo
sticks and killed him and ate him. I dried that skin out.

Well, we had a monkey named "Mick"--we put a dog
tag around him and named him "Mick the Yank." He was about
that big (gesture), and he was the damndest monkey. He
belonged to Jack Yarbro. A Jap guard had had him, and he'd
beat him and stomped him and got mad at him, and he broke
old "Mick's" tail. Jack come bringing him down to the hospital

hut. I was working with an Australian captain out there at the time, and we took his tail off. It took about six guys to hold that little fart (chuckle). His tail was about that long (gesture) when we got through with him, and it was bobbed.

Marcello: In other words, it was about the size of an index finger.

Douglas: Yes, but it was about that long; that Jap had just broke it. But old "Mick," he was skinned up all over, and we painted him up. Jack took him over--there was about sixty Americans in the camp--and tied him there by his bunk. That monkey loved me and that doctor better than he did Jack or anybody. He'd quit anybody when either one of us would walk in the hut and jump on my shoulder. He'd just pick around in my hair; I had a lot of hair then. I'd play with him for hours. But I'd shake that dried-out skin at him and just scare him to death.

I'd take him walking; he'd hop and he'd beat his meat. He'd sit up on that stanchion, and he'd get hold of it, you know. Everytime I'd see him, I'd go over and shake it, and he'd have to quit and grab hold. But you'd better run, because he'd shit in his hand or piss in his hand and throw it at you (laughter). That's the truth. I don't know how many times I done him that way. He'd have his attacks of malaria just like anybody else. Of course, I was taking care of those

guys. We didn't have a thermometer by that time, and I'd guess his temperature. I'd poke quinine down him; it'd take about six guys to poke that quinine down him. He'd have his drowsy feeling just like a human being.

Marcello: I assume there are other people who remember "Mick the Yank."

Douglas: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Not like that damn cockatoo that nobody can remember.

Douglas: (Chuckle) I can't remember that cockatoo. But old "Mick" now . . . we moved from to the last camp was in Nakhon Nayok, way up in northern Thailand--and we had took "Mick" with us. We took turns holding him. He was scared to death of that train, and he had us all just skinned up from trying to get loose. What happened to him at the end of the war, I don't know; I got so excited about that.

Marcello: Okay, now the whole time that you were at Prachin Buri you mentioned that the camp was there to build the two airstrips.

Douglas: Yes.

Marcello: How long were you there altogether?

Douglas: Let's see, I'm going to guess at it now; I'm going to say about four months. I think we went up there in January of '45 . . . four or five months. Because we went to Nakhon Nayok, and that's where I was in August when the war was over, so I'd say about four or five months.

Marcello: And I assume that this was strictly a dirt-type affair,

that is, the airfields were dirt.

Douglas: Airfields? I never seen the airfields, because I was in the camp. There was, I think, one running this way (gesture) and one like this by the camp. In fact, I got pictures of that thing right here.

Marcello: Now where did you go from Prachin Buri?

Douglas: To Nakhon Nayok.

Marcello: And that's where you were eventually liberated, as you mentioned.

Douglas: Right. Yes.

Marcello: Okay, you have only been there a few months, also, is that correct?

Douglas: Right. I'd say three or four months . . . maybe not that long. I'm not sure about the time.

Marcello: What did you do while you were there?

Douglas: Well, they had 30,000 Jap troops in the mountains, and we was at the foot of the mountains. This little town Nakhon Nayok is about four or five miles from here, and they have working parties up in there working for those troops. I made one two-week trip up in there. We'd build ammunition dumps and gun emplacements and bamboo huts. I went up there as a medic.

They had us living in a hog pen under a house up there for part of the time. They just moved the hogs out and put

us in there. It smelled just like a hog pen, too (chuckle). But it was bad because we was up in there in the jungle; we was sleeping out in the grass and on the ground a lot of times. But then I was back at the camp by the time the war was over.

Marcello: Were you still working as a medic or in the hospital?

Douglas: Yes. I was working for a British colonel in that camp.

Marcello: What was the general state of health in Nakhon Nayok?

Douglas: At that stage, not bad. I had one American that was dying from pneumonia, and that's the only bad sick I had. I was the American doctor; I didn't have any doctor there with me. I answered to that British colonel, and he treated me like a doctor. He'd have me sitting there by him, and when he done anything to an American, he'd say, "Is that all right with you, petty officer?" he called me (chuckle). He was very, very nice. But I didn't have much problems there; I had this one boy. When they told us the war was over, I went back down there and I said, "Get your butt up! We're going home." We left there about a week later and had him on a stretcher. He was the only one on a stretcher, and he was raising hell to get off and walk. He'd just gave up, and he snapped out of it.

Marcello: Now by the time you get to this camp, surely some of the Japanese must know that things aren't going too well for them.

Do you see any change in attitude on their part?

Douglas: Oh, I guess I'd say that probably they wasn't as bad. I don't think that was the reason, though . . . just guessing; now I don't know.

Marcello: Did they ever threaten you in case they did lose the war?

Douglas: To kill us?

Marcello: Yes.

Douglas: No, not that I know of.

Marcello: Did you wholly expect that this might happen if they lost the war?

Douglas: Oh, yes. We expected . . . I expected troops to liberate us. I expected them having to come in there and kill and fire and this type of stuff to get us out, but it didn't happen that way. See, when the war was over, they continued to guard us, and for one purpose; Lord Louis Mountbatten said they'd be held personally responsible for our safety. So they continued to guard us until they could get us out of there, because there was enough fanatical Japs in 30,000 troops that they would have come down there and killed us, and we would have had no recourse.

Marcello: Were you in the meantime perhaps secretly hoarding make-shift weapons or anything of that nature?

Douglas: No. No, not that I know of. I wasn't.

Marcello: Okay, I think this kind of brings us up to the period of your

liberation. Why don't you discuss the events leading up to your liberation and how it came about.

Douglas: One morning, on the 16th of August, they brought the working party in about eleven o'clock in the morning. That had never happened before. They just brought them in the gate and turned them loose. Japs went running out of the guardhouse burning papers.

That's all; we didn't know a damn thing. We didn't have any officers with us except the doctors and maybe a chaplain. We had a British sergeant major in charge of the camp, and we had a first sergeant, Jack Wisdom, who was in charge of the American troops.

So we didn't sleep all that night . . . just anxious. We'd so many times thought it was over or might be over. We wanted to believe it and was scared to believe it. So all night a group was sitting over in front of the hospital hut; we didn't sleep.

The next morning about nine o'clock, they passed the word that every man that could walk was to go out on the parade field, rice paddies. So we all went out there, and that British sergeant major got up on a box and said, "It's the happiest moment of my life to tell you that hostilities have ceased."

Marcello: What was the reaction?

Douglas: (Chuckle) They went to raising their flags, and everybody was crying. We didn't have a flag; the British had a flag, and the Dutch had one, and the Aussies raised theirs . . . and the South Africans and everybody. So we run back down there and started making us a flag. I got some iodine or acriflavine or something for the red. The next morning we had a ceremony raising that flag.

By the time we left there, we had two flags made. We was the first ones to leave, and we had one on the front truck and one on the back truck. Them Japs didn't . . . by this time, they'd run some officers in there with us, and they didn't much want them flags to be flown. We told them they'd better not mess with them flags. So we had one on the front truck and one on the back that took us into Bangkok.

Marcello: Did you have any sort of celebration immediately after the announcement of the surrender?

Douglas: In the camp?

Marcello: Yes.

Douglas: Oh, yes (chuckle). Well, I can tell you how that got out of hand. This full colonel, this British colonel I was working for, he called me over, and he said, "Here's enough sake for you and your blokes to have a canteen cup--a GI canteen cup--of sake." He poured three of them out in a

container for me and this boy that was here on Saturday night and a boy that lives in Tyler, Coy York. He said, "Don't let the troops see it now!" He had gone to the Jap captain and told him he needed some for medical purposes. He said, "Now you be careful, and don't let the troops see you. We don't want the troops to be drinking and get out of hand." Well, it wasn't thirty minutes until he was out there puking on the grass--drunk--the colonel (chuckle).

So the troops saw it, and that warehouse was full of demijohns that big (gesture)--great big crocks full of that sake. So they just sort of marched over there and just put them on their shoulder, and here they come. Hell, they was getting drunk. The American sailors and soldiers got to fighting . . . all friends, good friends; they still are today. They fell out in that mud just fighting the hell out of one another. Jack told one of them sailors do do something, and he said, "To hell with you! I'm back in the Navy; you can't tell me what to do," and the battle started.

Finally, an old boy named Flanigan--he was tougher than anybody there--jumped out there and he stopped them. He said, "The next lick that's hit, I'll hit it! We're too good of friends to be fighting among ourselves! Now if you want to fight, we'll go over here and jump on the Australians, and

they'll fight if you've just got to fight!" Oh, they was all muddy and bloody; they just went arm in arm with one another and went back in the hut and started drinking again.

Marcello: Now the Japanese are kind of standing back at this stage. They're still in the camp.

Douglas: That's right. They're still walking the perimeter. But that Jap captain seen that things was fixing to get out of hand. We had guys that they had to put under twenty-four-hour guard to keep from killing the guards. If they'd killed one guard, they would have took off. So we had to leave them alone. Everybody had him one or two picked out that he was either going to beat up or kill. So he took his walking stick and went along and knocked a hole in every one of them demijohns over there in that warehouse. That's the best thing he could have done, really, because it was getting out of hand.

Marcello: Did you get anymore food at this point yet?

Douglas: Yes. When the American officers got over there, they went to Nakhon Nayok and requisitioned those scrips or chits against the American government and brought all kinds of food. They really didn't have facilities to cook very much, but, of course, it was a heck of a lot better than what we'd been getting.

Marcello: How much time expired from the time you heard about the end

of the war until you finally were liberated from that camp?

Douglas: The 1st of September is when I . . . oh, from that camp?

Marcello: Yes, right.

Douglas: About . . . let's see, about a week and we don't hear a damn thing. There was a couple of planes that flew over a time or two.

Marcello: Are you getting a little impatient?

Douglas: Oh, me, I was impatient two hours after they told us (chuckle). But them poor Australians and the British, Dutch, whoever was still there. I don't know when they got out. But we left first.

Marcello: How did this procedure take place?

Douglas: They just told us to fall out there, and they pulled trucks up out on the road. We went out and just crawled in these trucks, and they took us into the docks where we had been before, the "go-downs," in Bangkok.

Marcello: In other words, each nationality seemed to be taking care of its own.

Douglas: They had to take care of their own. See, that's what happened in Bangkok. Me and Ells Schmid went back to dig these records up. He had buried Army records, and I'd had these medical records and maps of graveyards. We were gone four or five days back to Tamarkan. They give us a Jap guard and a Jap truck driver, and off we go. We stayed in the officers' camp

one or two days there in Kanchanaburi.

We walked down there, and there wasn't a building standing where Tamarkan had been. So he found his records, and we go over where my records was buried. They was buried in the roots of trees--this big tree with the roots up this high (gesture); I carried them down in cans and bottles. We couldn't find a thing; there had been somebody digging there. We dug and dug and just gave up. We went back to the river to take a bath, and there's an old native sitting there under a little old bush with four or five little old kids. When Dr. Lumpkin had died, I got his half-gallon water bottle--it was an English ambulance water bottle with felt around it. I was trying to talk to him to ask if he had seen anybody digging down there. He made the motion that if I'd give him some of my whiskey, if it wasn't just water in it, that he'd tell me. So I handed him the bottle, and right around the bush are all my records. They had opened them, but they hadn't bothered them. We figured out that they had seen guys coming back there digging jewelry and stuff up and just gone out there and started digging; that's the only way that we could figure it. But the records was intact.

So when we got back to Bangkok, all the Americans are gone--went back to the docks. What had happened, this colonel come in there with a P-38, I believe it was, and he flew over

Bangkok trying to draw fire. They didn't know whether they was going to be fired on or not. He landed, and right behind him was some C-47's. He commandeered some trucks and came out to that dock. They tell me the British colonels had seen them C-47's circling and landing and had a list of who was going out first. They presented him with that list when he got out. He said, "I don't care nothing about your list!" He just hollers, "Any Americans here?" "Yes, sir!" "Get your ass in these trucks if you want to go home!" They left them British standing there with their face hanging out. He didn't take one of them. Out they flew.

So then me and old Schmid was four or five days later getting out. We got into Bangkok . I believe I got in there on the 1st of September--that night.

Marcello: What did you do with your records that you gathered?

Douglas: Turned them over to them there at the hospital at the 142nd.

Marcello: I'm sure that was a very valuable find; they were probably glad to have those records.

Douglas: Oh, yes. Of course, the medical records was important, but the main thing was those graveyards. I didn't make the maps; they was made by professional people. I later talked to a grave restoration captain that was on a team that went into Rangoon right at the end of the war, and they used

records to find them. It was very gratifying to me that he said that they couldn't have found them . and which the jungle just takes over, you know, after you move out. Just like at Tamarkan, that jungle had just completely taken over.

Marcello: Whatever possessed you to think about preserving these records? After all, you probably had more important things on your mind than that.

Douglas: Now I didn't make them records. I kept some of the medical records. It was just they knew that war was going to be over sometime, and they had to have . . . some of those graveyards was just one-man graveyards; some of them was several hundred. They had to hide them. How come we buried them, Colonel Tharp called us over there and said, "Bury your records," when we was leaving Tamarkan. He got the word there was going to be a pocket search. They never had searched our pockets, and they didn't when we left there. But we'd always had to slip them by them, and it was a chance they'd kill you for having those records.

Marcello: I guess that was the question I was trying to ask. Sure, the records are important, but there were things that seemed to me that would be more important in that situation than preserving those records.

Douglas: Well, it was the thing that they wanted done. Really, you was taking a chance in keeping any kind of record. Like,

Dr. Lumpkin, after I'd had his water bottle about a year and it wore on the bottle, four pages of his diary come slipping out that he'd hid down in that felt. It was about some of the stuff that was happening at 100 Kilo. I brought that home to his mother and dad.

Marcello: After you were liberated, did they really prepare you for the real world, so to speak?

Douglas: No. I think they should have. Not only an ex-prisoner-of-war, I think all combat people should have a rehabilitation program.

Marcello: They probably thought they were doing you a favor to get you back into the real world as soon as possible.

Douglas: That's right.

Marcello: Because I guess there was no experience with handling prisoners-of-war and so on.

Douglas: No, that's right. Well, see, I flew into Washington, D.C., one afternoon, and the next day I'm on leave. But about the next plane or two, they started putting them all in the hospital. Some of those guys stayed two or three months in the hospital before they come home. But I think the best thing . . . they didn't rehabilitate them; they just kept them in the hospital for the procedure. But the best thing that happened to me was to get home. I had one attack of malaria after I got home; my dysentery had cleared up. But

I'm talking about your nerves and your thinking and all this--to get it straightened out. I think that there should be a program on a situation like this.

Marcello: And I'm sure it was a different world when you came back as compared to what it was when you had left.

Douglas: It certainly was. Oh, definitely. Even if it hadn't changed, you have a hard time grasping after living like we was living, and then all the sudden everybody's just doing all they can do for you. They really did treat us nice.

Marcello: What sort of problems in terms of adjustments did you have when you came back?

Douglas: Oh, I was just nervous and just couldn't hardly sit still. I just wanted to go, and I think it was kind of generally the same way with everybody.

Marcello: I've heard a lot of these ex-prisoners say that they felt very uncomfortable around large groups of people, and they just had to get away.

Douglas: Yes, I just had to be doing something. I don't know, I just . . . it's hard to explain. You don't even know it at the time, but I can look back on it now and see that my thinking and some of my actions were just wild as hell. It seemed like I'd been cheated; I felt that way.

Marcello: I understand a lot of the former prisoners kind of had a chip on their shoulder in that they weren't about to take

orders from anybody at this stage.

Douglas: Oh, yes. Yes.

Marcello: You'd been taking orders for four years and that was it.

Douglas: I don't think I had that too much, but I know some friends of mine that was real strong on that; they couldn't stand for anyone to tell them what to do. But I don't remember having that kind of problem. I got out of the military and stayed out two years and went back in. I went in the Army; I'm retired from the Army (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you have trouble adjusting to a normal diet once again?

Douglas: Yes. I've been very fortunate; I haven't had a whole lot of stomach trouble. But for a long time I couldn't eat much, but that's just because my stomach had shrunk. You can see how heavy I am; it got back out. But it was, oh, two or three years, I guess, before I began to . . . I had indigestion real strong. It was the change of food, and my body had to change to it.

Marcello: As you look back upon your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as being the key to your survival?

Douglas: I don't really know. I was young and healthy. But I don't believe there's any key to it, because, heck, the same guys in the same shape didn't make it. I figured the old Lord had His hand on my head; that's the only thing I can say. Because guys died right next to me, and guys died with . . . wasn't as

sick as I was. I don't know what the key to it is; I don't believe anybody does, really.

Just like Dr. Lumpkin, the man that was really needed in the camp--I was worse with the dysentery than he was for a couple of days--he got worse and I got better. We wasn't taking a damn thing for it; there just wasn't anything to take for it, really. Of course, he didn't eat. I'd sat right there and watched him . . . the normal diet is a liquid diet, but I'd seen too many people die with that. So when I came down with it, I ate everything I could cram down my throat. We'd got some dried beans in--butter beans--with worm holes in them, and I ate everyone I could get. I'd puke it back up sometimes, and I'd run to the toilet again; but I knew that I'd seen them guys die on that liquid diet. They couldn't have enough strength to survive it.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Douglas, I have no further questions. Is there anything else that you think we need to talk about and get as part of the record? I'm sure that after I leave you'll think of other things that we should have talked about, but that's one of the hazards of doing an interview of this sort.

Douglas: I think that there should have been guys decorated that wasn't. I don't know of anybody that was decorated from that camp, and I think some people were slighted. Of course, there's nothing that can be done about that, but I've seen

some things done that people should have been decorated for. Just like Captain Fowler--a great, great man who did a great job--I'm sure he was never recognized for it.

Marcello: When you say that Captain Fowler did a great job, refresh my memory. You may have mentioned this within the interview.

Douglas: Well, you know, like I told you, he jumped up on a box on the ship and talked to the guys; that's just a small thing. But the job he did in Burma--fussing and fighting and taking beatings and things that he took--to try to help those guys and try to get better conditions or guys sick off of work parties; I just think he did a tremendous job.

Marcello: In other words, you're referring to his role as a leader, so to speak.

Douglas: That's right. Outstanding man. Of course, he stayed in the military and became a full colonel and retired with thirty years in.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Douglas, I want to thank you very much for having time to talk with me. You've said a lot of interesting and very important things, and I'm sure that scholars are going to find this material very valuable when they use it to write about World War II.

Douglas: Well, I hope so.