Oral Histories of Bataan Veterans
Clifford Martinez

Clifford Martinez was interviewed in his home by Christopher Schurtz in Las Cruces, NM, November 30, 2000.

Schurtz: We'll go where you want to go on this. I've got a bunch of questions. Maybe we can start of by getting some general stuff -- your birthday, where you were born and if you have any brothers and...
Martinez: Well I don't know nothing about my family.

Really?
Yes. Well, I have five half sisters but I only know one of them and she contacts me. The others...well that's history.

Okay.
Yeah, but anyway, I enlisted September the 7th 1940 7th Cavalry at Fort Bliss. Me and about let's see three or four of us, one guy from here, a buddy of mine Bobby Compton, we enlisted here and got in Troop C 7th Cavalry Ft. Bliss. We was issued everything except the horse. We got up one morning and checked the bulletin board and it had volunteers for overseas duty. It had Alaska, which we thought was gonna be too damn cold, they had Panama, that was too close to home, Hawaii we didn't like the sound of it, Puerto Rico, didn't like it and the Philippines. So we figured that was pretty far away. At this time the war was getting pretty strong in Europe. We said, "Well hell, we'll go to the Philippines nothing going [on there]."

So we signed up for it -- Bobby, Professor Lee, Shorty Jordan and...I'm stuck I can't remember his first name...we signed up for it. So we shipped out of Ft. Bliss. We got aboard the Sunset Limited to San Francisco. In San Francisco...we was taken out to what they call Angel Island, that's the depot for overseas and was there about a week, we uh... or a week and a half. Had to go through a bunch of tests and shots, this that and the other thing. Finally, they said we were gonna ship out so, I forgot exactly when, I think sometime in the latter part of September, I think. Anyway, they took us down to the port area in San Francisco, Pier 7... got aboard the US AT Grant Troup Transport...

Do you remember when this was?
It was some time in the latter part of September...

Okay, so this was really quick from the time that you joined...
Yeah, well see they were hungry for overseas duty. And that... I was still...well things were starting to improve from the Depression. Anyway, got aboard the U.S. AT Grant and they made me an MP aboard ship going over. I was stationed in the non-commission officers quarters and we...let's see we pulled into Pearl Harbor and I think we had a weekend deal there.
Was this the first time you were on a ship?
Yeah.

What did you think about that?
To me, I'd never seen...the biggest thing I'd ever seen was a rowboat. But getting on that thing was something else.

So you guys got to Pearl Harbor...
We got to Pearl Harbor and I had to stay aboard most of the guys got off or half of the guys. I think there was about maybe four I think maybe about 400 on the ship going to P.I. And the others were going to other spots. Anyway, I got my pass the next day, made the rounds with the old pineapple factory... I checked in there, got sick on pineapple juice and...they made a little, something like a little restaurant, like a bar and grill called the Squeeze Inn and went into there and looked at all kinds of stuff on the menu and spotted octopus and I said "What the hell's an octopus." So I asked for it. It tasted good but the damn thing, you had to chew, chew chew, you know? But I had made arrangements with Bobby that...if you try to bring a bottle of liquor aboard the damn MP's, you know, bang you with clubs to make sure you didn't get aboard with it if you had it hid. So, he got a barracks bag and a rope, I brought three bottles...come up there on the starboard side and he dropped the line over and he put the bottles in there and he hauled them up. I went back aboard and told 'em, said "Well I'm clean" they said "Well you sure?". I still had my MP band on- they said "Are you sure?" "Yeah" Pow pow. No bottles. So we went aboard.

We sailed outta there ...see I can't remember these days and the dates. I can approximate, but I think we were there three days, I'm not sure. But we shipped out and headed toward Guam I think it was. Anyway, we had to cross the international dateline. And the officers had a big to-do about it you know, big party and pollywogs what have you. And we crossed it, of course you lose a day when you cross that thing. So we hit Guam, they had us stand out, anchor out of bay. I think they dropped off a bunch of people there. Then we went on into some other islands...this is quite a...I think it took us a couple of weeks, I'm not sure. But anyway we hit the Philippines in Manila in October, about the middle part of October I think. And we had to stay quarantine out in Manila Harbor, in the bay for 24 hours. Then they brought us into Pier 9 and Manila Bay, harbor and unloaded there and then they put us onboard some small inter-island vessels into Corregidor.

Corregidor is about approximately a mile high and, I forget how big around, it's pretty good size. So we landed Bottomside...put us on some street cars and took us all...well they stopped at what they call Middleside, left a bunch off there and took us on up to Topside and unloaded us there. And they start calling out names. Going to different outfits and my foster brother Bobby they sent him to Ft. Drum. I though we could be together, but me and Gutchalk a guy by the name of Martinez, a whole bunch of us, went to Battery A, 59th Coast Artillery Seacoast Defense. So we went into there. Coming up
on the streetcar I remember these guys "Sucker! Sucker!" And they were all Doby citizens. See anytime you spent more than one hitch in P.I. you were a Doby citizen.

P.I.?
P.I. Philippines, we called it P.I. Well like Honolulu, we didn't call it Honolulu, we called it Oahu.

So what were you guys doing there what was your M.O.S. or your…
Yeah I'm getting to that. We got assigned to our outfits, issued…they took all our clothes off…see I still had cavalry boots and braces and gear you know. Took everything away except an o.v. shirt and issued us new clothes khakis. And so first we went through boot training. I was lined up in front of the barracks for roll call and they ask, "Any of you recruits PS men. Previous service men?" And one guy raised up his hand, friend of mine Gutchalk "Oh, I am! "What branch was it?" "Oh I was in cavalry in New Mexico National Guard" and they laughed at him. 'Cause, see at that time National Guard and regular army didn't get along too good. Anyway we had to go through boot training. First it was rifle drills, foot drills and then marching Inventory training, but there wasn't much to it not like it is now. See our main outfit was big gun, 12 inch Barbet so we got in on it. It's a hell of a big gun. It had a .75 caliber mounted on the top. So when they went through gun drill they go through like they're firing the big gun but the fire the one on top.

But anyway they got us up there us new recruits they had us lined up to watch what was going on. And they wasn't going to fire the75 they were just going to hypothetical, so they brought out a great big cart had the projectile on it, 1500 pound projectile and course it was a dummy. Then they brought out dummy Polly charges put the shell in "Home ram!" And got it in there then they put the powder "Home ram!" and the corporal Alvord he was the firing chief, he'd say "Ready. Load. Lock" Get their report and then you say "Fire". I shoved up my damn hands to my ears waiting for the thing to go off, you know and one of the recruits said "What the hell you doing?" I said "Well hell I'm waiting for the damn thing to go off" he says, "That's a dummy charge, you stupid ass."

So things went on, we'd have maneuvers you know with a big gun like we was actually in combat. Sometimes they'd have a tugboat pulling a target look about the size of a ship and you had to fire at it with the big gun. We were number one in tote-target.

Was this the gun that you were using, was it a new one they made or…?
Oh no, this was from World War I. Hell the ammunition we had, everything we had dated back to World War I. The powder had to be kept at a certain temperature, and of course we had our own ammunition tunnel and everything. Then we had another battery called Battery Way. This battery here was Battery Harm. And the other battery, Battery Way, had I believe it was four 12- inch mortars and that was close up firing like they had to fire on Marveles across the bay. And we'd go through training with that too.

How much practice did you get on this stuff, I mean it was old ammo and old….
Yeah…

So did you feel like you got enough practice on it, enough training…?
Yeah, we got pretty good training on it. Anyway, like we'd be on maneuvers there with Battery Harm, planes fly over and they drop powder bags and if you got any powder on you, you were hit and if it hit the gun emplacement, you were docked out. They never did hit the gun emplacement, so we lucked out pretty good there. And then after boot training things got down to normal. I think our hardest job was cutting paths, what they call Koegen grass with a sickle. That was the hardest job. We had to, well you took about three showers a day. You changed your uniforms three times a day…

Because you were sweating so much…
Yeah. Humidity was very bad there. We had the big water bags and then they had these things with salt pills. Now they tell you not to eat salt but over there you gobble salt. Anyway, we had our gun drills, every Saturday there was inspection and a big parade. And if you were lucky you got a pass to go to Manila. Well after we passed boot training, we all got a pass to go to Manila. And we had…I had a little old 120 camera, box camera, I took pictures with it and we went to some park there, I think it was Dewey Park, I'm not sure. They had a couple big elephants.

And we were sitting on a bench admiring everything, here comes a couple of things coming up here that looked like women, dressed, couldn't tell…beautiful nice long black hair. So I said let's go get a couple rounds "Oh yeah let's go Joe." Went into the bar, dance hall -we even danced with the damn things. One guy come up to us, an old timer, he said "Hey guy." He says "You know what you got there?" I says "Nah", "Those are bendy boys." He says "It's a man dressed up like a woman." "Oh, nah nah." "Alright, go ahead". So I got dancing around and put my hand up under the skirt, goddamn he was hung bigger than I was.

And that ended the period there. But when you had a pass to Manila, they had what you call prophylactic stations, about every two blocks around town was prophylactic stations and you were given a prophylactic kit you were supposed to use 'cause there was so much venereal disease going on there and I think 31st Infantry suffered more than any outfit, well they were stationed in Wall City there in Manila and they had quite a few suicides. Guys would get this- you see, at this time, if you came down with a venereal disease, they docked your pay; you had to pay for it- the time you were in the hospital to the time you got cured. When I first went in our pay when I enlisted here at Ft. Bliss was $21 a month. We got overseas it increased six percent, we got $36 a month, so you can imagine if you come down with something like that how much…so I myself kept myself pretty clean, I was kind of scared of that stuff.

How long was it before you realized that there was going to be war?
Well, we heard a few rumors. Then we noticed a hell of a lot of what we thought was fishing going on. It wasn't fisherman, we later found out it was Japs and they were digging holes in the shore burying ammunition and stuff like that. But none of us thought
anything about it. So the closest thing that we got was when they bombed Pearl Harbor. I was in the hospital in Manila, I broke my leg…

**How did you break your leg?**

Uh…going onto the ammunition deal was a ring [inaudible] about this wide, I had my foot in there, I didn't break my leg, I twisted it. Some guy hollered something at me and I twisted around and out she came. But see, I was supposed to go home. They had to operate but they couldn't do it there and then the war broke out. In fact the day they bombed Pearl Harbor, I was in the hospital, Sturnburg hospital in Manila, army hospital and I had my leg in a cast from my hip down to the tip of my toes. And when they bombed Pearl Harbor, they hit us at high noon and they bombed the harbor down there.

First they hit the harbor, then I think they went to Clark Field, and all the airfields around us: Clark Field, Stasenburg and Manila Harbor, then they hit Corregidor. They leveled the barracks at Topside on Corregidor. See we had the longest military barracks, in rows, they were a mile long and held different units, but they leveled that. But the next thing I knew, I was getting my cast cut off and I had to use a cane and was shipped back… well I got hit, in that foot there [points to left foot] I got hit there. It blew my shoe off and almost cut my shoe in half…

**What happened?**

Bomb fragment, shrapnel.

**And this is when you were in the hospital then?**

No… yeah I was coming out of the hospital. I was going down to the port area to get aboard to go to Corregidor.

**So you were about to leave when the bombing happened?**

Yeah, yeah. It was a…I dived under a truckload of flour and I dove like that you know, and that's when I got hit, in my feet. I waited for the air raid to sound off and made it on down to the dock. It didn't hit the inter-island vessel. There was about 40 of us aboard that, going back to Corregidor and man, you talk about sweating it out, we was watching them skies all over. But we made it back to Corregidor and I stayed three days in a little tunnel at the hospital they doctored my foot and put me on light duty. I went on up to Topside with my outfit with our battery, and of course it was all bivouacked out there you know in the tunnel. I got shipped to Bataan as observation, sending back firing orders at Pucat Hill. I think there was about seven or eight of us on that detail.

**How was your foot and leg holding up? Were you able to get around…?**

Oh yeah, it hurt me hell, I had to wear what the call a go-ahead, a slipper like that but...we got to Pucat Hill set up a radio and tower and everything and I had one of those radios like this whenever we sent messages back to Corregidor. And I was there off and on, I went back and forth and wound up April 9, I think it was about nine o'clock or ten in the morning when Bataan fell. They had a bunch of guys, I'm talking about the Japs, they came up to us. Of course, we'd already messed up our rifles, of course I was carrying a sub-machine gun at the time, I just bent the barrel. They made us lay down on the ground,
searched us, kicked us around got us up, tied our hands behind our backs and just my group, put us in with another group and with us was about three Filipinos, Philippine scouts. And they put us in this group and we stayed there till, yeah I think it was the next morning. There'd been troops coming through. Finally, we got in the end of it and they marched us down… I don't remember the name of the damn road, but it was the Death March…

Not to interrupt but I'm kind of curious, leading up to the surrender, what was it like…"
It was hell, it was hell. Our position wasn't near as bad as the boys on the frontline. We would have to go into the hospital in Bataan and try to get supplies for us and there just was nothing to get. We didn't have hardly anything to eat…

What stuff were you eating…?
We had c rations then…

But you were running out of those….
Oh yeah…

How was the ammo holding up? We're people getting shot, injured in battle?
Oh yeah all around us, but like I said, we weren't on the frontline, we were close to it, because we had to be up there to observe all the things going on and send in firing orders to hit. Well the last we done, from what I found out… we send in firing orders, this group I was in were placed in behind Jap 10-inch guns and we had already sent firing orders in. Here they come lobbing the shells over and we was lucky it was front and behind us. You take a 1,500-pound shell coming at you, it made a crater about 15-foot deep, 30-foot diameter. It'd level everything within 150 yards. But we managed to get out of that. Well, we got into this group, like I say, and they put us, I think it was on the tailend.

But they had bombed and shelled the hospital, I don't know how many times. The wounded were getting re-wounded and killed. You didn't couldn't stick your head up out of your foxhole a foot 'cause you'd get it shot off
But anyway they started us march[ing]…

Did the call for surrender come into you guys, or were you told to surrender?
Yeah, we got it on the radio. They said destroy your weapons and all the equipment…

So you were in Bataan in the south, or where in the Bataan island were you, up north?
No I was about the middle part of, I can't think of the province. I remember the names of the hills very well.

So you started walking…
Well they started march[ing] us and these two Filipino guys, said "Joe. We're gonna make a break. Whenever it's clear we'll give the signal you hit the brush." So I says well hell I'm willing to try anything. We'd heard rumors about what they'd done once they
captured you. You know, they had their hands wired behind their back, bayonet 'em, shoot 'em. That's what we were scared to death of. So anyway we made it, I'd say, approximately 12, 15 miles on the march and this guy says "Let's hit it Joe" Man there was no guards right there like this on this side, they were all on that side, so we made a dive for the brush. And we crawled, I guess, four or five miles on our belly, through the brush. Hell, we was all torn and scratched to hell.

Did anybody see you?
No. Well the guys around us that didn't [come]...see there was about 15 of us that made the break and the guys that didn't, they were too afraid to do it or something you know. It was "Good luck to you". So we crawled I guess about five miles. We stood up and then we heard a patrol coming. So we climbed up a damn tree. The patrol come by they were firing their damn machine gun, all over, up in the air and around and I got hit in the left leg. Damn thing started bleeding, going down my boot and that and I was afraid to fall down on the ground so I tightened up my pants and hid up there. Finally, after they went by, we gave about 20 minutes, we got back down. When we got [down] I raised up my leg and the damn bullet was still sticking out from the machine gun. He goes. "I'll get that out."...had a bayonet, pried it out. See, I still got a pretty clean scar you can see it there. But it was stickin' out like that and he just dug in like that and got it out. And we'd come across a place, well it was a...what the hell you call it, a barrio and we got us some gin before we got up in them trees. And he had a bottle of that gin with him and I had a bottle and that guy poured that damn gin and Whew man. I took mine like this [pretends to drink from bottle]. Yeah, you talk about burn. Well you know, you figure pouring alcohol over an open cut. But anyway that healed up and we made it down to Mariveles...

You guys are going through the jungle or how are you moving around...?
We're following the Filipinos.

Everybody's sticking together in a group?
Yeah. Well, we're kind of spread out, but in sight of each other. You don't want to go in one group 'cause hell they hit you head on. This way you're spread out, you can duck behind a tree or lay down if you spotted something. But we didn't spot another thing. We got down to Mariveles and we didn't go through the town part, we went around the side and there was a bunch of bancos, these little canoes with outriggers on them, we called them bancos, we got aboard, waited till dark crawled on those. These Filipinos, they led us. Hell I didn't know where I was or where I was going. And they led us on that and we had to go across the bay, it's a mile across the bay. Now we're getting shot from the Japs and from our own troops. So coming into the docks there in Corregidor, to the beach ...

Because everybody is down in Corregidor right? So that's where you're headed?
Yeah. Yeah, see that's my home base. Anyway they said "Halt, raise up your hands and give us the code." Hell we didn't know what the hell the code is, nothing, you know. We said "We're Americans" I identified myself as Battery A 59th name, rank, serial number. So they come in "Advance and be recognized" The man had spotlights on us, you know. We couldn't see...in front of them. So we came ashore, to the head, they interrogated us,
and we told them we sent firing orders from Pucat Hill, said "Yeah we got them" So then they sent us back up to our outfit.

Well the bombings and the shelling, we went 48 hours, 24 hours a day bombing and shelling. You couldn't get out of a foxhole. And it seemed like every time one of those damn shells that came in or bomb. It seemed like it had your number. You'd just hear that whistle right down, you know.

**Were people really starting to kind of lose it...?**

Yeah. Well, we were losing patience, because we kept, oh you'd hear MacArthur's bringing in reinforcements. Then the thing that pissed us off Eleanor Roosevelt, that was Roosevelt's wife... well before the war she would say anyone doing tropical service, when they come back to that states would have to be put in a camp to get reindoctrinated to be an American again, which is a bunch of crap. But then she was making radio speeches, "Butt your heads against the rocky shores of Corregidor. You will never take Corregidor" and all this crap you know. Then on top of that Tokyo Rose telling about our girlfriends getting married and deserting us and nobody wanted us anymore you know, that they were going to "live like kings" under the Jap control. That turned out to be a bunch of crap. So anyway...

**What did you think about MacArthur when he left?**

Very few of us thought a hell of a lot about it. We thought he should have stayed there. Of course, now I look back on it now and he did the right thing. Well, he did what he was ordered to do, but yeah he done the right thing, the other thing is...

**Did you feel like you were being abandoned?**

Yeah. Yeah. Oh hell, you better believe it. We'd sit there and think and that... depressed, oh very depressed. And the rations on Corregidor got down, they wound up eating the damn quarter master mules. And c rations ran out. Ammo was low. And I noticed on Bataan we'd throw a hand grenade or something, the damn things would get thrown back. Old World War I stuff. Anyway we went through this bombing. They hit our placement, they didn't cripple our gun but we burned our gun out. But we had an extra barrel and they gave us 24 hours to fix it to replace the barrel or we were going down to Bottomside. And man, we fixed that barrel. And so we got it firing again.

We leveled the southern end of Bataan Peninsula, we leveled it all. We could see through the glasses the Japs running off, jumping off the cliff and that, you know...and so finally, like I say, we had this period of 48 hours, it was more than that. Of constant shelling and bombardment. They hit our gun emplacement, well it blew up the 75 on top, it knocked that off, but our gun was still fireable and uh....

**Were you hitting stuff, were you hitting what you were...?**

We was hitting land. What we were trying to do was destroy the peninsula because the ships were coming in dumping troops off and we were firing at the ships and the land. But we sunk a couple ships out there, but...
They just kept coming.
Yeah, yeah. They even had horse cavalry over there. I didn't know that until after they surrendered Corregidor they loaded us in a boat took us over to Manila there were stock boats had damn horse cavalry in there. But, well things were getting very bad. Finally we got orders to surrender. That was May 6, 1942.

So now Corregidor has fallen. What happens now?
Well they invaded Corregidor that night, wave after wave. Everybody that was around Middleside and Bottomside was shipped down to the ground that was the front lines. We couldn't fire because it was too close for our mortars, too close for our big guns, so we had to sweat it out. They gave us extra ammunition… I, before that I was on .50 caliber, they were crap, but when they gave us extra ammunition and load[ed] us up, was starting to move, when the order came. So the next thing I know we got orders to surrender. Do not destroy your weapons. That was the first thing we did, bent the barrels on the rifle and the gun commander put the dummy shell in the gun, powdered charge, got a big long line and got in the tunnel and fired that thing and poof, just blew up like that. They never used that again.
Hell, well all my belongs was down in Manila ready to go back to the States, but the few belongings we had there we had to leave everything. I think I got out… I had an Elgin watch, it was heart-shaped, with a stretch band and they told us to hide our stuff. Well that morning when, before we went down, some guys dug a hole and took two canisters the guys put their watches or their money or whatever they had in there and they buried them. I kept my watch and I put it up under my sleeve up under my arm. I had a class ring, silver and they never bothered that. They looked at it but they never bothered it. Took my billfold out, had a picture of my girlfriend some other things in it and they tore it up you know…

So what are you thinking about the Japanese at this point?
We didn't know what to think. We were scared to death. I was almost pissin' my pants like the rest.

Were they just really aggressive or what about them…
Yeah…

Tell me about them…
Well, they come at you and hell, you didn't know what the hell they were saying, didn't know what they… they give you orders, you know, you had to go by there motions. If you didn't do it right away rifle butt or they try [to] bayonet you or something like that. Hell, we didn't know what to do and we were scared shitless. But they marched us from Topside down to Middleside. Middleside is where the Jap lines were. We got to there and that's where they started their stuff. "Yankee cowards. American cowards" all that. On Bottomside that's where it was really something. They made us walk through where the bodies were laying, Marines, Air Force everything, dead laying on the ground, all bloated up. We just wondered what the hell was going to happen to us.
They took us down to Bottomside to what the call 92nd Garage Area and we didn't have no shower. All we had was our mess kits. We had gas masks during the war, we threw the gas masks away stuffed what stuff we could in the carrier and like I say I had about two cans of c rations…vegetable stew and a couple cans of soluble coffee, little round things like that. That's all I had and some guys didn't even have that. But they had us down there a week, over a week no food no water. And a lot of guys got diarrhea so the had these trenches…

How was your health at this time, your leg…?
Well, I wasn't too bad of shape, my leg was bothering me a bit but I wasn't too bad of health. But I was hungry, I was losing weight and that. So, one morning they came down, got us all up and made us wade out to a boat and we got aboard this boat and got on this ship. That's what I was telling you about they had cavalry there, they had these stalls, there was still horse shit in them. They took us, the ship, to Cebu and they stopped out, made us jump in the water. We had to swim or wade almost a half a mile I'd say to shore and the Japs, the guards, they had boats you know. There were several guys who drowned on that.

They did that just because they didn't have time to transport…?
They didn't have nothing to transport us in. So we got to shore....

This is in Cebu, you said?
Yeah…

This is in the Philippines still?
Yeah, well it's part of Manila, outside of Manila. So we got there and marched overland to the big highway called Dewey Boulevard. They held us there till they got everybody and by this time we was all pretty damn weak. And I all we had, I had my helmet…no, I didn't even have my helmet, I had, well you seen DI? That's the kind of hat I had on. So they started marching us to Manila. I don't know how far it was, it was quite a ways. But they….no water no nothing. And Filipinos lined up on both sides of us throwing candy and sugar and rice balls.

So were people picking it up or…?
They were throwing it to us.

And were you guys picking it up?
Yeah, yeah. If we got caught picking it up we got a beating. But we managed to do pretty good. But the Filipinos took the worst part of it. Oh hell, they beat and bayoneted them poor guys and they'd still [do] the "V for victory" you know. So they marched us downtown Manila to what they call Bilibid Prison. That used to be the federal prison for the Filipinos before the war. And the put us there, nothing to eat, no water, overnight. Had to sleep on the concrete. And I didn't even have a blanket there, nothing.

We curled up and next morning we came out and give us a rice ball and man we gobbled that up, I was still hungry. And the marched us to a rail yard and they got little damn
boxcars, I'd say normally hold maybe 30 people, so they wound up with 100-150 in this thing. You couldn't squat, you couldn't sit. You had to stand had some vents in the windows around there but you couldn't breathe in there it was really hot. So we rode I don't know how long to Nuedaejica that's as close as I can come, I've been trying to remember the name of that town...

**And this is a prison they had there?**
No, no. It was a holding pen. A great big, well they had a fence around it. Still no blankets, no nothing. We had to lay on the ground, we got there in the evening, stayed there all night. Nothing to eat, no water. Next morning they got us up, nothing to eat and took us...some of the guys got on trucks, the ones in real bad shape. I was still messed up with this, but I kept on the march. And they were taking us to what they call Cabanatuan One Prison Camp. And I marched I guess almost half and finally gave out, so they threw me up on a truck.

And we come up to this camp, now the three buddies of mine, Professor Lee, Shorty Jordan and this other guy I can not remember his name- anyway we got in the truck. I was told later these guys, instead of turning to the camp they kept going. They picked them up about five miles down the road and they beat the hell out of them and they asked them what they were doing. Well, they said the war's over we're looking for a job. So they brought them back, tied them to posts in a standing squat position beat the hell out of them, every time they turned around. They held them there for four or five days. Then they got the whole camp, like this, they dragged them down made them dig their own grave, which wasn't very deep, you weren't able to dig very deep and made them stand up and they shot them. So when they were filling the graves, the officer came down and coup-de-grace three of them. Well that was the first killing that I'd seen, in prison camp. But they gave us half a mess kit of rice kind of soupy stuff and a one canteen cup of water a day. And nobody could take a bath or anything else. And I was constipated, I got constipated. I went approximately six days without a bowel movement.

**That's kind of the opposite problem a lot of the other guys were having with diarrhea.**
Yeah, uh-huh. Well, there was a bunch of us that way. So finally one of the guys come in off details, they had details going out in another camp down the road. So he came back, I told him "Damn I wish I could shit," you know. He says "Hey, I got some caramel pony sugar, eat some of it that'll make you go". What it was a clump like this about [5 inches] around and [1 inch] thick, what it was it was scrapings off the top where they boil, make sugar and this was the scrapings off the top, so I ate about damn near half of it. I guess about 10 or 12 hours later I got a pain. At the end of the hill they had ditches dug, nothing covering it, just ditches.

So I started running down that hill and there was little ditch like this and I came down like that and I just shit all over to hell I'm tellin' you. They had water faucets with strict orders not to use water, but I'm full of shit so I take my pants off, wash them. Here's this 90 day wonder second lieutenant there caught me. I said, "I just shit all over myself. I had to wash." "That's no excuse I'm gonna turn you in."
This was an American?
Yeah, an American officer, lieutenant, 90 day wonder. So he went up to the officer's barracks, told them what happened and they said well bring them in and asked me my side. I told them I said, "I got one pair of pants, I got the shits I said I fell down, I shit all over myself there' a water faucet that way, I washed my pants." He said "Well you know you're not supposed to use water." I said "I know but sir I had to do something, I had to have clean clothes." He said "Well hell lieutenant, you wanna be that way about it you go ahead and punish him." So we got back to the barracks, he says "Alright we're gonna put you on half rations." The guy looked at him said "You crazy? We're only getting half rations." "It's alright, he disobeyed a direct order." So they put me on half rations. Time come to give half rations, here comes a guy-spoon of rice, another guy- spoon of rice. See, there was thoughtfulness among the guys themselves and they sacrificed themselves to make sure I got my share of rice. The lieutenant didn't see that.

So did this happen a lot, did the whole army mentality carry on through the years was everybody still respecting the rank and file?
Yeah, yeah. Well see we had, when they put us in the barracks, they had an officer in the barracks that we had the highest ... but this joker here, I'd sure like to remember that guy's name 'cause I'd sure like to put his name in print. Anyway…

What were you doing there?
We wasn't doing nothing. They had details going out, what they were doing, they were building Number 2 I believe, Cabanatuan and there were details going out. Then they were making up details to go to Japan and my buddy Bobby got in one detail to go to Japan, but it broke my heart cause we were so close. And then losing these other guys…

So were you sticking by your buddies from here and Ft. Bliss that you'd known…?
Well until this happened and then I was by myself. My own outfit, I don't know what happened to them. I never seen any of them after we left Corregidor, I never seen them anymore. Guys from the 60th and some other outfits had got here, but I was in more with the 200th and the 515th throughout the Cabanatuan days.

Why was that, is it because that's who you…
I don't know, see I don't know what happened. I couldn't find any of the guys, none of them. See some of them were sent to some other camp down in the southern part of the island. I never made contact with my outfit until some time last year, a guy by the name of Smith a met in Ft Bliss. Anyway I was in mostly with the guys from the 200th and the 515th.

What were they like?
They, well I knew a bunch of them from here [Las Cruces] before the war, see they didn't get over there till November of 41. But a bunch of them I knew, Cruz Garcia he's dead now, Lecho [Lorenzo] Banegas, a whole bunch I knew. And I met up with this buddy, this guy from Belen. His name was Benny Valencia. He was state champion boxer before the war and he'd been in the highway patrol. But I got buddy buddy with him. He was a
big guy, but he got down pretty thin. They made up a bunch of details, they told us we
could put in a garden and we were going to get vegetables from the garden, we were
gonna go half and half. Well the good stuff that grew on the bottom they got that was
their half, the stuff on top was our half. Like Comate sweet potatoes, they got the
komodas, we got the sweet potato vines. Tastes something like spinach. It was pretty fair.

**How were the Japanese eating? I've heard they didn't eat very well themselves.**
They ate pretty damn good. Well, a bunch of guys [inaudible] for them getting extra rice
so they must have been doing pretty good. And then they butchered carabao, they got the
meat, we got the bones. So they were doing pretty good. I got out of the first detail it was
carabao detail.
Well they used the carabao to plow. And there was a guy, a buddy of mine, Julio Barela
was with me on that detail. He still living in Fairacres.

**How were you able to work…?**
When you got a bayonet up your hind end and a bunch of clubs around, you just go. I
don't know how, but you just go. But this was pretty easy detail, see you could only work
a carabao for a couple hours and you had to put them in a mud hole and get another
carabao and go on. Then you had a damn stupid Jap up there with a bayonet, poking the
damn carabao in the ass if he didn't move fast enough. But me and Julio got around pretty
good on that detail. We had a good guard, we called him Donald Duck. He asked us what
Donald Duck meant. "He's a movie star in Hollywood" If he ever found out he was a
duck, it would've been something else. But he would let us smuggle sweet potatoes onto
camp. He'd give us a break out there, which very seldom they'd do.

**Why do you think he did that?**
I don't know. He looked like a young kid, like a little duck. But he was real good never
cussed us never hollered at us and he'd give us the butt off a cigarette and stuff like that.
He'd give us a break, build us a fire. But if another Jap came around then he'd act meaner.
But I think that he was forced into the thing itself and he didn't like it. I think he knew the
score himself but he had to do what he was ordered, you know. All I could say about him
was he was good, he treated us good. We had other details, they put us pulling weeds.
One day I remember this guy Benny Valencia was with me…where they beat me, I
wasn't pulling weeds fast enough or talking or something and they came up and beat the
hell out of me and hit me with a rifle butt in the face and shoulder…

**Was that the first time you'd been beaten?**
That's the worst beating I got, first one…then he hit me across the back with a pick
handle and I heard a snap and I went unconscious. Well. I woke up in what they call the
hospital area and boy my back was screwed up. So I stayed there for seven days and they
sent me back to the barracks. But Benny Valencia was with me, he'd seen them do it.
Then they put me on so-called light duty, which was the carabao detail with Donald Duck
again. So I worked there then we finished up that I guess.

**So your left leg's been hurt a couple times, your right leg…?**
I had shrapnel in my knee and foot.
Now you got your back. How was your health otherwise?
I was losing weight fast. See they weren't feeding us worth a damn…

Did you have dysentery and all that?
I came down with dysentery, malaria, beriberi, pellagra…

What kind of beriberi did you have?
I had wet beriberi. Those guys that'd have dry beriberi, see with wet beriberi you'd swell up, with dry you feel like you're on fire. And those poor guys they couldn't stand anything to touch their feet. I mean, they had to be suffering bad.

And the whole time you're wearing the same clothes you've had this whole time?
Yeah.

Did you ever get a change of clothes?
No. No. See, what we had to do, they issued us what they call g-strings, that's that piece of string you pull around and put a rag up there. That was all the clothes we had. When we ran out of shoes, we used to make what they call go-aheads, piece of wood, bout the size of your foot, get a rag, nail it here and here that's what you wore, those were the only shoes we had. You had to make do, you had to make them uniforms from what clothes we had they had to last.

Then we started getting bed bugs. Then we got body lice. We slept on bamboo slats. The barracks was made okay like this they had what the call bottom bay both sides divided into seven man tiers with slats. They did give us a blanket and that's what protected us little bit the slats. Put half down under you, and half over top of you.

Bed bugs, I tell you, you could bang a slat like that and it'd be black from bed bugs, so they got to where they gave us 50 gallon drums and you fill them so full of water--they put wooden platform in there- they fill it with water, boil it you put your clothes in it, your blankets everything in there and the steam would kill the lice and everything. You could take your pants, like this and there'd be bed bugs, I mean fleas and lice-gray backs we called them-in the seams and they'd just eat you raw. So once a week you got to steam the clothes you had. So the way we worked it out in the farm detail, we wouldn't wear our clothes, kept them to put on at night to keep warm. We'd just wear the damn g-strings.

Because the sweat would just kind of tear your clothes up?
Oh man, I tell you. Oh hell, we'd come in and our backs would be white.

Did you prefer to work than to kind of sit there in camp?
Well if you sat there, you died. If you sat there, you died. We were burying on average 75 to 150 a day.
Now were you on any of those details, the burial details?
No I never made a burial detail thank God. This one guy Benny Valencia, no another guy Ben Blue, he was a full blooded Indian from Taos he was a wrestler before the war and he weighed I'd say about 200 pounds and he got down to 100 something. They took him from the X-ward, they call they put you in there to die. They took him out to the graveyard three different times. Each time they took him, he'd make some kind of movement and we'd bring him back. And he'd get on his feet and he was just a skeleton. He made it back to the States after being almost buried three different times. I got down, let's see think it was 42, 43 I got down with TB. I got really down then, 94 pounds. They put me in TB ward, had us quarantine. They said we're gonna put you on a rich diet: one duck egg day. Plus the rice.

Living it up I guess.
Man I tell you.

Now were the Japanese getting sick?
Not that I know of.

How long were you in Cabanatuan?
I was in Cabanatuan till let's see the first part of 43 I came down with TB and I'd say about May 43 they put me on a detail to Palawan building an airfield there. See Pan American Airways was building an airstrip there before the war and the Japs turning it into a military base. They took 50 of us on that detail took us on an inter island vessel, And going down there they stopped at an island called Kuia, a leprosy island, we had to unload so supplies, some stuff. The Japs wouldn't go ashore, the Japs were scared to death of them.

But when we went ashore we had to go barefooted, so when we came back we had to step in some disinfectant crap before we could come back aboard the ship. When we'd get out of sight, when we were loading something, they'd come up to us give us the scuttlebutt on the war, tell us how it was going. So we'd carry that back there we'd get to where we was going...see they had radios there, the Japs wouldn't do anything cause they wouldn't go ashore. So anyway we went down got back aboard made it to Pollywog Porta Princessia was the dock there. Sometime that next evening they lined us up and they had an interpreter come-one hell of a piss poor interpreter. Called him John the Bastard, he said he was the Baptist, so we called the John the Bastard. They laid the law down. Before all this were put into ten man shooting squads, back in Cabanatuan I forgot that…

Shooting squads?
Yeah if any one of the ten escaped or attempted to escape, the other ten would be shot.

So there obviously had been some people that had escaped earlier, getting to be a problem?
Anytime you'd go to bed you'd say hey any of you guys go let me know I want to go with you.
Did you think about escaping anymore?
No, it was impossible. There were guys that did, but very few. So they gave us a lecture and we was in an old schoolhouse, a bivouacked schoolhouse, all concrete floors no wood to lay on, no bunks, no nothing. And they gave us a lecture, told us what we had to do and not to talk to any civilians, or look at them. If we did we'd be shot on sight. A bunch of the guys got to be truck drivers and they were our only source of what was going on. And they would send us out to this airstrip. We had to dig and lay forms. We got where there was a big spring, pouring out water. So when they weren't looking, we got a hose and cut the nozzles off and laid the hose in the spring covered up to about the middle part of the field. Then we poured concrete on top of it. Well that spring that was seeping through weakened the concrete. See they didn't even use reinforcement wire on the concrete, they just poured it, smoothed it out. So we could manage to destroy I think it was about 15 aircraft they come down and hit that soft spot. And the Japs never did, never could figure out what it was. The only thing they figured was the concrete was a poor mixture. The concrete couldn't stiffen up.

So you guys were always doing stuff to sabotage…?
Oh hell yeah. Then one day, the diesel roller wouldn't start, the battery dead. There was about 150 of us on that detail. Got as many as they could to get a hold of that roller to try to push it to start. So you can imagine trying to push a damn steamroller to get it to start. They get up there and hit us with damn pick handles and try to make us push that thing. And finally one guy talked to a guard that could speak English a little bit, said "look the battery's dead take the truck battery out and pout it in there" So they put it in there and started it. The battery they put in the truck was dead so we had to push the truck. Well, we got that going.

Well this went off and on for I don't know how long till one day we had our rice ball and there was about 7 or 8 of us decided we'd go ganger some food. So we was in a banana plantation so we slipped off into the jungle, got a bunch of bananas, were eating them, brought some back. We took a little too long. The break was over. Came back everybody was lined up. The guards are standing there with fixed bayonets at them. I guess what they were going to do, they couldn't spot us, they were going to shoot the whole bunch. We came back, got us to lay down like your doing push-ups, only you had to stay there and if sagged down to the ground you got the pick handle across the back. I set down I don't know how long and they got me across the back, knocked me unconscious. The other guys they beat them up pretty bad. They said while I was down, they kicked the hell out of my ribs, my chest was all caved in.

Got back to camp, no hospital, they had something like a first aid corpsman and they had enough plaster of Paris to go around of this part of me here and the other part they mixed some really dry cement wrapped me with rags and put this on. I couldn't move I had to lay flat like this. So that hardened and man when that hardened it weighed a ton. I couldn't move, they had me on my back. To go to the toilet they'd hold a pan under there so I could pee or crap. They'd raise me up; they'd hold me so I could crap.
I laid there for a bout a week and then they shipped us back to Manila. During that week, see we'd get what they called Christmas packages, boxes. And we were supposed to get them once a month. But we got one box at Christmas time. Well one of these guys got issued a Christmas box except us guys going back to Manila. I had got acquainted with a guy from Deming he name was... I can't remember... he was 200th I think and we got to be pretty good buddies there...

So we went back by boat to Manila. I got into Manila and they were passing out these Christmas boxes. They asked us if we'd got one we said no. So they gave us a Christmas box.

**This is at the end of 1943?**  
Yeah, Christmas 1943, just before Christmas. They took the cast off, the chiseled it off and they peeled I don't know how much skin off. Stink, goddamn you talk about stink and they doctored me up and they X-rayed me and my back had fractured, my spine. So there's not a hell of a lot they could do. They didn't put a cast on me, they gave me some kind of brace that you could wrap around I could take it off at night. But they had to let this stuff heal up first. So I stayed there till I healed up and then they shipped me back to Cabanatuan. Things were really rough back there then. You go out on detail, doing this and that, mostly garden stuff. And we got on a detail a guard we called Clark Gable, he had big ears like Clark Gable. And he was one mean old [inaudible] If you looked at him the wrong way, he'd let you have it, he'd beat the hell out of you, rifle butt, pick handle, whatever. I had quite a few of them...

**He went after you a couple times?**  
Oh yeah.

**Do you remember anything that you did...?**  
Lot of times if I missed a weed, any of us, we'd get a pick handle or rifle butt. And he got me three or four times. And I wound up back in the TB ward again. See I was off and on with this malaria and all that stuff. I stayed in there, I guess I was in there till I got sent back to camp. I was on light duty, but I never did get back on carabao detail. They had me doing other things, cleaning up around the camp and that. But in January, I remember very well, in January these guys had got a hold of some dried rice. You get a hold of that and you take a bottle and kind of dampen it a bit and roll it and make flour out of it. Then you take rice and let it ferment and that would be the yeast. So the guys made me up a big birthday cake that big you know, and made it out of rice flour... made it with coconut juice.

**How old were you at that time?**  
Let's see I think I was about 23. January the 20th. See the thing... they always tried to find each other's birthdays, they always tried to do something to cheer you up, build up your morale a little bit. It helped. They'd sing happy birthday to you, you know. Then they'd take swats at you. Anyway I got called on detail to go to Japan. So 350 of us were sent to Manila, Bilibid. We stayed there quite some time because the ship couldn't get out because they were having naval battles at that time. They issued us Navy dress blues and
of course all I had was baggy pants and a g-string, still no shoes. They even gave us a pair of shoes. And we had stayed there...well they would get calls and line us up, take us down port A, last minute take us back, on account of all this naval action going on.

So finally they got us aboard this ship, 350 of us in a damn hole. You could just barely squat down. You couldn't lay down; you could squat that was about it. No toilet facilities, no water, no nothing. We made it to Okinawa. They had to pull into Okinawa because of submarine activity and there was other ships ahead of us and they were bombed and torpedoed. The hell ships, I don't remember, I remember one ship, it wasn't on our detail they called the hell ship it got sunk. But I don't know too much about that. But we had to lay over in Okinawa.

**What was it like on the ship going over there?**
Well I'm getting to that. We had to lay over in Okinawa a couple of days. We wasn't allowed on board except, oh they made some things you could sit on over the rail where you could do your job, but in the hole they would send down buckets of rice and you'd get maybe half a mess kit of rice. They boiled tea and you'd get a canteen full of tea. That was your rations.

**When they sent down the bucket would everybody pass it around or...?**
No you lined up and you had a guy issue the rice to you. So there was guys passing out. When we left port, we was going like this, zigzag course all the way into the Yellow Sea. The Yellow Sea was really bad. We couldn't get out...a lot of us got down with diarrhea, dysentery and were passing out. No air, the only air was a small hole coming through the hatch. There's guys dying. I think when we wound up going ashore we had carried 50 dead out of there. I was about half dead myself. We pulled into Yokohama Easter Sunday of 1944. That I will never forget.

**How did you know it was Easter?**
Well we kept tabs. We pulled into dock, they had this battleship that the Americans had come in with subs and sunk it right there. They were going to put it to float and the Americans sunk it right there in the harbor, right at the dock. And we started looking at it you know, kind of laughing. They got a hold of us and pushed us aside.

**How was that on your morale?**
Oh man, that really brightened us up a little bit. So they took us from Yokohama to a streetcar station and loaded us on streetcars and took us to Tokyo, what was left of us. The dead they left there on the dock, just laid them there on the dock. I don't know what happened to them there after. They put us under a bridge of some kind, it was snowing all to be hell. I'd say there was three feet of snow five foot, on the ground and we was in these Navy uniforms. And some reporter, Jap reporter for the Jap newspaper interviewing. "What ship was you on when you got sunk?" And "Ship? We weren't on no ship" We said "Hell we've been in prison for over two years in the Philippines". "Oh no, huh-uh, no. The Japs sunk the American fleet and you guys are with the rescue." Navy dress blue uniforms, you don't wear dress blues or dress khakis when you're fighting a war, you know.
You think that's why they gave you the uniforms?

Yeah. They was using us for propaganda to build up their people's morale. And they took pictures of us and you know everything. And here I am, great big 94 pounder in a dress blue Navy uniform. They put us a train that night and we rode all night long. They gave us a wooden box when we got on the train about like this that thick full of rice, seaweed and that was our meal for that day. So in the morning we come way up in the mountains some place, well it was Hitachi, that was the name of it, which turned out to be Hitachi copper mines. But during the night, every time we come through a town they'd come by and close the windows so nobody could see out and nobody could see in.

Some time in the middle part of the morning we hit this depot up there at Hitachi and we had to walk up the mountain. They had a great big copper mine up there. We had to walk up there and they lined us up and divided us. They had rooms, I think there was 10 or 12 beds to each one, you slept in a circle like that, it was flat, made out of bamboo. They had a kind of pad on them and in the middle of the floor was a fireplace for a charcoal pile. Think 12 of us to each room. And they had faucets outside and sinks where you could wash. After we got in and got settled down and they pulled us out, room by room to go to a warehouse. "Please take off your uniforms, fold them up neatly, put them in the box. I think what they were doing was shipping them back to get some more.