

Horton, E.L. "Jim" Interview 8-16-93

[Speaker 2]

Interview conducted with Mr. E.L. Jim Horton, H-O-R-T-O-N, at his office in the Rotunda Building 4301 Congress Street, Charlotte, North Carolina. Interview conducted August 16, 1993, by Dr. Charles Johnson, University of Tennessee Center for the Study of War and Society. I generally start off just asking when you joined the service and where you were from before that and why you joined and what happened to you in the early part of your time in the military.

Where were you from originally?

[Speaker 1]

I was born in Farmington, Missouri. Went to the University of Missouri. I had a reserve commission.

[Speaker 2]

Okay. Your undergraduate, what did you do? Engineering or?

Business. Business? Business.

[Speaker 1]

And you were in the ROTC there? I was in the ROTC. Called active duty in November of 1940.

[Speaker 2]

About a year before the war then?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Went to Leavenworth, Kansas, first duty. Then volunteered to go to the Philippines for a one-year tour and got over there in January of 1941.

And was assigned to the 57th Infantry, Philippine Scouts. In August of 1941, a group of us were sent out to train the Philippine Army. So all during the war, I was with the Philippine Army, which is not the same as the Scouts.

[Speaker 3]

Okay.

[Speaker 2]

And those... Did the Scouts have entirely officers from the states or were there Filipino officers as well?

[Speaker 1]

Most every officer was an officer from the states. And so all of us were officers from the states and we were instructed by the Philippine Army who had their own officers, but we were there to instruct. And when the war began, we stayed and I was then in the 21st Infantry in the Philippine Army.

Were you on Luzon? I was on Luzon, yes. So we started out at Langayen Gulf and moved all the way back to Japan.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have contact with the Japanese as you were moving back? Yes, we did. How did that go?

This was the first time anybody shot at you on purpose.

[Speaker 1]

Well, we got back there, you know, things were pretty disorganized in the beginning. But we did move back and got back and set up a line of resistance back in Britain. We lost very few troops and moved back to Britain.

But we really were commanding those troops, although they had their own officers and we were... Our official position was instructive, we were in command of the troops. What sort of equipment did you have?

The Philippine Army had coconut fiber helmets, an infield rifle, and those young soldiers, most of them were fairly small, as you know, and could hardly get the stock up to their shoulders, had to fire the gun from the muscle in their arm. And they had tennis shoes and tacky uniforms. Were you carrying an 03 Springfield?

Yes, yes, we had a caliber .45 pistol in Springfield.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have much in the way of heavy equipment?

[Speaker 1]

No, we had a water-cooled .50 caliber machine gun for an infantry battalion. That's really the heaviest gun we had. Not very much?

Not very much, no. We had a few mortars, small mortars, but ineffective.

[Speaker 2]

And for transportation, mainly your feet?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, we started out, we had some horses in the beginning, but they didn't last very long until we had to eat them. And then there were some old trucks, and we confiscated some civilian automobiles that we used until they were shot up or burned up because we had to use aviation gasoline. Don't burn them up.

Don't burn them up in a hurry. So, mainly the transportation was on foot. It's a long walk from the Garden Gulf down to Patan.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, it's a long walk. Did you... Granted, it was a very confusing situation.

Did you have any sense that anybody was in charge, or were you just sort of on your own up there?

[Speaker 1]

No, we had a line of command as we moved back into Patan. And we had a good commanding officer, and we were held together pretty well. And the Filipino soldiers, as long as the American officers would stay there with them, and we were in evidence, they would stand by.

When the American officers started to check on the supplies in the rear, the Filipinos wanted to go with them.

[Speaker 2]

Did you lose a number of officers on the way back, or...

[Speaker 1]

No, as we moved back into Patan, we didn't lose too many. We were in pretty good shape, and we defended our positions well until the latter part of March, early April of 1941. But we were running short on food, running short on ammunition, and so as time went on, and we had a lot of hand-to-hand combat, we just ran out of food and books.

[Speaker 2]

So there weren't adequate supplies then for food or ammunition? No, there was no way to supply us.

[Speaker 1]

No ships got through. And you just lived off the land. You could care about anything you could find to eat.

[Speaker 2]

Did you see anything of MacArthur or Wainwright?

[Speaker 1]

Not during the conflict. Of course, I was over there for several months before the war started, and I would see MacArthur riding around the caisson in the car again. MacArthur, I thought, was a very good general, but he was very egotistical, and he seldom returned a salute.

Hmm, I hadn't heard that. Interesting story. Before the war started, General Wainwright, we worked half a day when we got over there.

And then we were free. Officers called at 11.30, and we were free the rest of the day, most of the time. I was in the officer's barber shop, and we brought him to the officer's club there one day, and General Wainwright was in there getting his hair cut.

So he told the Filipino barber, he said, I want you to shave my hair. And so the Filipino barber said, General, do you really want me to shave it? He said, yes.

He said, all the time I've been over here, I wanted my hair shaved, and my wife never would let me do it. And he said, now that she's sent home, I want you to shave my hair. And I was sitting there laughing at him.

He was very funny. What did he look like with his hair shaved? He just looked like, like Jordan.

If only it wasn't that dark.

[Speaker 2]

You, getting back to that time in March and April, I would imagine you ran short of medical supplies as well.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. About all we had was a little adequate for malaria. Of course, we didn't have access to much.

Many medical officers or anything for us to deal with, because they had to send them back to Korea.

[Speaker 2]

Back to Corregidor or something?

[Speaker 1]

Well, back around, they had a hospital facility at Maribeles, but Corregidor really had the best facilities. It was about, it seems to me, it was a couple of miles, a mile and a half across from the tip of Maribeles to Corregidor.

[Speaker 2]

You understood that unless there were reinforcements, this thing was going to end only one way?

[Speaker 1]

The war plan, as I understood it, said if we could hold out for six months, reinforcements would be there. And, of course, we believed that. But we had lots of rumors that the ships were coming, and there was a landing of our friendly troops down the bottom of the dam, but nothing ever materialized.

So we realized pretty well into March and April that that was unlikely that we would ever get any help.

[Speaker 2]

Were you personally in pretty good health still by that time, or were you getting pretty run down?

[Speaker 1]

My health held up pretty well. I was thin, and we were on short rations. What do short rations mean?

Well, usually maybe rice twice a day. Once in a while we might have some carob out for you, something like that. But a canteen cut full of rice was a good meal.

That's tough to keep on going, Dad. Well, it is, but surprisingly you hold up pretty well. Just like anything else, at it.

But I will say that until we were overwhelmed, that the Philippine troops did a real outstanding job of staying in position and fighting, because it was their country, and they were fighting for their country, and they had no love for the Japanese. We were in a firefight one day, and I had this little Japanese orderly that was with me, and we came upon this Jap who had been shot in the neck. He was lying in the bank of the creek.

So I told my orderly, he wasn't dead, and I thought he was going to live, and I told my orderly, I said, now you stay here and watch him, and I'll come back, and we'll send him back for interrogation. So I was back in about 15 minutes, and the little Filipino had turned him upside down and stuck his head in the creek, and he was down, because their fear was very, very strong about the Japanese invading their country.

[Speaker 2]

When did you get the word, or how did you get the word that you were going to have to surrender?

[Speaker 1]

Well, at the end, we were moving back. We were retreating, and we moved back, cleared back to the last line of resistance, and at that time, we met a scout out there, and we had gone back and even gotten through some Japanese lines to get back to... So they'd gotten behind you?

Yep. And then we were told that General King had gone forward to request surrender, and that's how we got here. But we knew our position was very perilous.

How did you feel? Do you remember? Well, it's hard to express how you would feel in those circumstances.

[Speaker 2]

I never faced that, and I just...

[Speaker 1]

I guess you resigned to live a day at a time and take it as it comes. I think that's the way I felt. You didn't know what was going to happen.

You didn't know what you wanted to do, whether you wanted to try to escape up in the hills and try to find guerrilla tactics or whether you would surrender with most of your troops.

[Speaker 2]

Anybody you know get up into the hills safely? Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

There were some people, a couple of guys that I knew, that went up in the hills and made it throughout the war. Americans, you mean? Yeah, Americans.

But by and large, you know, the troops were so hungry and so exhausted and by that time so disorganized that... And the Japs were coming in on us pretty fast. We didn't have much time to make a decision to try to escape.

[Speaker 2]

And of course, if you're ordered to surrender as a member of the military, then you don't, at least under military law, you don't have the option. Now, some people did take it and head out. But if the order comes to surrender, then that's what you do, it seems to me.

[Speaker 1]

That's what you did. Now, are you interested in experiences in the prison camp? Oh, certainly.

[Speaker 2]

I'm wondering about, sort of, you had seen the Japanese, you had fought with them, but now you're facing them in an entirely different context. I was wondering what that was like, your first contacts with them and what happened.

[Speaker 1]

Well, they were very ruthless. They stripped you of all your possessions, your brains, your watches, all of those things. And in the Japanese Army, you know, a one-star, a two-star private can stand a one-star private up and beat on him because that's the way they exercise rank or discipline.

So we were treated, by and large, in that same fashion. So the transition into prison camp was rough. And by that time, so many people were infected with dysentery and malaria and we had no medicine.

And the troops were dying at a very fast rate. Our rations were very low.

[Speaker 2]

How long a march was it from your capture to, where did you go, to Cabanatawan or to...? Well, the trip was from, almost at Maravales, up to O'Donnell.

[Speaker 1]

Camp O'Donnell? Which was near Tarlac. Okay.

So that trip took a long time. We lost... Well, you know, you've got, you've got your pretty good account on that, the death march.

Yeah. And I don't want to go into that in detail because you've got that, right?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, well, the numbers that you see in the books usually are between 75,000 and 80,000 surrendered. The number who made it to Camp O'Donnell, somewhere along the way, they lost about 25,000. Now, some escaped along the way, many died.

But the figures are never going to be very accurately known because we don't know how many surrendered to begin with.

[Speaker 1]

I doubt that there were 80,000 troops. I'd say more like, and I'm just guessing, 50. 50,000?

Yeah, probably. I'm going to say we got to O'Donnell 7,000, 8,000 Americans, maybe 20,000.

[Speaker 2]

So that's half. Did you have a certain group that you stayed with?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, you'd stay with your buddies and try to protect them.

[Speaker 2]

About how many were in that group that you were with?

[Speaker 1]

A dozen or 50? No, no, not that many. Maybe seven guys that you would be close to.

Try to protect them, make them get up and move.

[Speaker 2]

Did the seven of you make it? No. No?

Four.

[Speaker 1]

The fact that people were in poor health and they didn't give us adequate rations and they didn't give us an opportunity to drink water that was drinkable just caused an awful lot of dysentery. And when somebody was down and they couldn't get up or they couldn't carry a wine, it was absolutely horrible, too. It was pretty tough.

[Speaker 2]

Did you expect anything better when you got to Camp O'Donnell? The idea that if you could make this march then, that maybe it would be better down the road?

[Speaker 1]

Well, you always expect something better. If you don't look forward to anything better, you're in real trouble. But that was not a good experience.

But then, moving from O'Donnell to Cabana to Oire, it was much, much better.

[Speaker 2]

Was that a march to Cabana to Oire? Yeah. Or a march?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Everything was a march. I'll tell you an interesting story about that.

We had a fellow in the camp. His name was Hornbossom. And he had been an engineer in the gold mines up there.

And he was a man up in his 60s. So, along the route from O'Donnell to Cabana to Oire, he picked up a stick on the road to help him. When we got to Cabana to Oire, the rainy season started.

And he stuck this stick in the ground. And that stick sprouted and began to grow. And it became as big and vigorous as this room.

And when we got back, I thought that was so interesting. I turned that story into Reader's Digest. But they didn't pick it up, no.

That's too bad. That's a good story. That is a good story.

And Hornbossom made it through. And his wife had contracted leprosy. And he went down to Louisiana and stayed with her in the leper camp.

And she recovered and they left there. And he lived for some number of years after the war. And I guess he was nearly mid-60s at that time.

I know he was over 60. He was a good sturdy fellow. Now, there was some publicity on that.

But I thought that was quite a compliment to that fellow.

[Speaker 2]

How long in March was it? Do you remember from O'Donnell to Cabana to Oire?

[Speaker 1]

How many days or...? Well, I think it all goes together. I guess 40...

[Speaker 2]

Make it two or three days?

[Speaker 1]

You had some pretty emaciated troops going over there. I imagine your shoes were given out by then. Yeah.

You didn't get any supplies. You were clothing just the rags you had. Because the Japs took away most everything, all your possessions.

And they didn't issue you anything? Well, you know, it was hot over there. And they issued us a juice drink.

A lot of us went around primarily just to juice drink.

[Speaker 2]

How long were you at Cabana to Oire? Do you remember?

[Speaker 1]

I'm going to say August or September of 1942 until we got on the prison ship in December of 1944. So a year and a half? Two years, I guess.

Oh, yeah, over two years. They took us from Cabana to Oire and down to Billabed Prison in Manila. And then they shipped us out to Billabed Prison.

We were in Billabed about a month, I guess.

[Speaker 2]

Now, what was the day like at Cabana to Oire? Were the days similar one afternoon?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I worked. I chopped wood for the kitchen in the Jap kitchen. And on that job, I really got some extra rations.

And I was in pretty good shape at that time. And then we worked on a farm. We raised cassava root, which are like food for corn.

And our treatment at Cabana to Oire and our food at Cabana to Oire was probably the best camp that I was in during my internment.

[Speaker 2]

Why do you think that was? Any idea?

[Speaker 1]

Well, it depended on who were the Japanese officers in charge of the camp and who your guards were. And a lot of our guards at Cabana to Oire were young kids who really had seen little or no combat. Or they were older troops who had guard duty because they had been infected by venereal disease or something like that and weren't fit for combat.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have nicknames for them?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, we had nicknames for them. You may have heard this story. We had one guy that we called Donald Duck.

And so one day, he asked us who Donald Duck was. And we told him he was a famous American movie star. So some way, he found out who Donald Duck really was.

And the guy that told him, he got after him and stood him up and beat him with a stick. Gave him some terrible beatings. But yeah, we had our own nicknames for a lot of the guards.

[Speaker 2]

The bad ones particularly? Yeah, yeah. Some were worse than others?

Oh, yes.

[Speaker 1]

Oh, yes. Some were much worse than others. And the interpreter that we had at Cabana to Oire was not a very good guy.

He translated, made a lot of mistakes in his translation.

[Speaker 2]

Did you get any Red Cross parcels while you were there? Yeah, I think I got...

[Speaker 1]

Maybe I combined it to one, maybe three. I'm not positive, but it seems to me it was three.

[Speaker 2]

Did they make a difference?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, man, yes. That was delicious. Remember what was in them?

Well, some C-rations and some chocolate. And it seems to me there was coffee in there, or cocoa.

[Speaker 2]

Did you get any mail? Or were you allowed to write any letters or cards?

[Speaker 1]

The Japs let us write some farm cards. And I think I got three to go back home that my family received, three or four. And the Japs had written on there places for you to fill it out.

I mean, they'd fill it out for you like, I'm well, I'm happy, and then you could sign your own name. That was, I think all of those cards we were allowed to send were combined into one. I don't think I had an opportunity after that.

[Speaker 2]

In over two years, then, three postcards, essentially.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

These were written to your parents?

[Speaker 1]

Well, you could write to them if you wanted. I wrote one to my fiancée and two to my parents.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, you were engaged.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Yeah, I was engaged. She was going to come over there, and before she could get over there, they said all dependents, future dependents, those that are here have to leave and nobody else can come.

[Speaker 2]

Long war for your parents and your fiancée, too. Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

But you know, that gal waited for me all that time. Good for you both. And we got married in January of 1946.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have any kind of medical facilities at Cabanatuan?

[Speaker 1]

Very basic. We just didn't ever have anything like a hospital. The experience on the ship going from the Philippines to Japan was probably the roughest experience that I had during my life.

We started out with about 1,600, and we got to Japan with about 400. You lost three out of four of them. Yeah, we lost.

We were bombed first in Civic Bay, and it was our ship. There was no markings on the ship. The ship was loaded with Red Cross supplies, but that was the Japanese, our supplies, but it was for the Japanese.

And when our planes came over and the ship ran aground and they finally opened up the hatches and let us get out and swim ashore, and they put up machine guns on the shore so that we had to swim that path to the shore, which seemed like a long, long way, but probably was not more than a little less than half a mile. That's a long ways. Yeah, that's a long way.

And there was a lot of timbers in the water, you know, and if there was somebody, you'd jump overboard, and if there was somebody there, you could help get on a board or something and help push them to shore. When we got to shore, there was a tennis court there at Civic Bay, and it was boarded up on the side, and they stuck us in this tennis court. And we were there for three days, and during that three days, we had, I think I had three spoons full of raw rice, and we had one water spigot in there.

We had all these guys crowding in there, and there really was not room for everybody to lie down, and you had to take turns standing up and hunker down or lie down. And your buddies, as I say, would usually have six or eight guys together, and one stood in the water line, and one of us continued to go around to get enough water. And there were an awful lot of wounded.

[Speaker 2]

As a result of the bombing?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, as a result of the bombing. For goodness' sake, I had a doctor friend, Colonel Jack Swartz, who tried to do some amputations with a little scalpel. And no anesthetic, no nothing.

But, you know, the infection set in, and it was necessary to try to amputate. After that, they put us on a carnivore.

[Speaker 2]

Let me interrupt just a second. Did you continue to have some kind of command structure with your... Was there a senior officer in the group?

Yeah, yeah, yes.

[Speaker 1]

Yes, there was always... I think we were pretty good shape for leadership. But so much of it was a matter of attitude and a desire to survive on a day-to-day basis.

And you would try to help those who felt you weren't going to make it. And I think one of the critical things was that if you thought you weren't going to make it, if you gave up physically or mentally, you just did not survive. The will to survive was probably the greatest attribute you could have.

[Speaker 2]

You wonder why some people had it and some people lost it.

[Speaker 1]

This may not be a fair statement, but I noticed that the men... You can't dodge a bullet. You don't know the circumstance.

But those who had lived with a silver spoon had never had much opportunity to be independent before they got inserted. Seemed to be the ones with the least desire to live and the first ones to give up. And those who had had a pretty tough childhood or youth or had to live and matured early in their life had the best outlook.

So a strong desire to make it made it.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I've heard that. I've read it and I've heard it from others as well. Once that went, if you saw it go in somebody and you couldn't regenerate it, then it was probably over.

You're right. But it must have seemed as though you were just just climbing one mountain to find another mountain. From Cabana Doan to Billabon to the ship.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. But... You know, it's amazing how strong a desire you have to maintain life.

And when you think about how good it's going to be when you get home.

[Speaker 2]

What did you think about when you thought about how good it was going to be? What sorts of things did you think about? Food.

Okay.

[Speaker 1]

Food was a big desire and I don't know whether you want this on tape or not, but it didn't take long to lose your sex drive. I've understood that. Food was a big factor and we talked for hours about when we got home and what we would have and the guys would think about menus and that was a big part of our discussions.

[Speaker 2]

Okay, you said you were on a train?

[Speaker 1]

They put us on this train and they put us in there and crowded us in there where you couldn't sit down and closed the door and there was these cars and there wasn't any air getting in there. There were a lot of people that passed out in that circumstance and some of them passed out. And they took us to San Fernando in our union and we were there maybe one, maybe two nights.

One night we stayed on the beach. I think it was Christmas Eve of 1944 and the next day they put us on a ship and we headed for Japan. Same circumstance down in the hole.

We got to the harbor at Takao and Fumosa and our planes bombed again and they made some direct hits. We lost four or five hundred people there and it was there that my best friend we were sitting together and he was hit with a big flank. Not in the shelling, the bombs.

He was hit with a big flank on his head and he died in the arms. And...

[Speaker 2]

All of you had been through together.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. This was a boss from Henson State. And anyway...

[Speaker 2]

Had he been with you in the Philippine Scouts?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, yeah. We'd been together all along. And so...

The Japanese would not let anybody come down in the hole where all of these wounded and dead people were. And after three or four days they said we're going to have a burial party. And they picked out certain ones who they felt were physically able to survive that.

And I had to be one of those. So what they did is they took a lighter and a big mat and they would take the guys that were dead and they had to throw them in these mats, took them over the side and we had to get in these lighters and we went out to dig. It was sort of a sandy beach.

We dug a hole and threw these lighters in and we had to drag them from the boat across the sand and into the hole and then we covered them up. And that was a pretty rough experience. They had been dead for several days and they didn't stay in one piece.

And that was probably my experience with the worst feeling and my feeling towards retreat. So anyway, they put us on another ship and from there we got to Japan safely. If we were attacked by a torpedo we didn't know anything.

We got to Japan safely and it was the coldest thing ever in Japan. We landed at Moji, M-O-J-I. I don't know where that is.

Well, I don't know exactly. It's on the coast and down below Tokyo. And from there they took us by train to the province of Kyushu.

And from Kyushu we stayed there until the spring of 1945.

[Speaker 2]

What were you doing there? Were you in a camp?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, we were in camp there and we were sewing uniforms for the Japanese labor force. As I said, we stayed there until the spring of 1945. And they moved us then by train and ship and train again from Pusan, which is at the bottom of Korea, up to Incheon until the war was over.

What were you doing in Korea? In Korea, we worked in the gardens and that was our principal job. Could you steal food to eat there?

Well, yeah, we tried to. I was pretty sick in there. Malaria or dysentery?

Yeah, dysentery primarily, yeah. I was down to about less than 100 pounds. You're a pretty tall fellow for 100 pounds.

And I was so weak that I couldn't get up by myself. I'd have to crawl over against a building or a tree and prop myself up inch at a time.

[Speaker 2]

Did you know that the war was almost over?

[Speaker 1]

We, at the end, we could see the American planes over and we could talk to the Koreans who would come into the camp to take out the bingo buckets. And we knew that things were going our way.

[Speaker 2]

Did that make it easier for you to hang on? Oh, sure, sure.

[Speaker 1]

And about two weeks before the Americans came in to rescue us, the Japs told us the war was over and that they were leaving. And they left us to our own devices in the camp. And the American planes came over and these were B-17s or B-24s.

And they had some big 55-gallon drones and they were parachutes. They were tied on the parachutes to the drones. And when they dropped those things, of course, the parachutes wouldn't open.

And they all came down and could flop and bust it open and cans of fruit salad went flying everywhere. Dangerous, too. And one man got a broken leg out of it.

It was the only casualty I remember. But there was an oil slick outside, right outside our camp. And it was a drum full of number 10-size cans of cocoa.

And when that thing hit the oil slick and we saw that out there, a bunch of us ran out there and just scooped it up with our hands. Ate it. This same Jack Swartz, who was in my camp, we had one little area there that we called a dispensary, and he still had nothing but this little scalpel.

And so all of it happened to come, fall through the shack that was our dispensary. So I had a lot of malnutrition, so I was on the end. And we were good friends.

So he was looking at the medical supply. And he saw this one bottle and he said, I don't know what this is, but it says on the bottle penicillin. Penicillin?

Penicillin. So he said, this is penicillin. And he said, I know it isn't going to hurt you.

And he said, you're the first guy in this camp that's going to get a shot of penicillin. So anyway, the strength in those days wasn't very much. I'm not very strong for this today.

So it did. And then as we got some food, I began to gain weight, and the sores began to heal. One other story I might tell you that might be interesting.

It wasn't too far into the city. We were just right on the edge of the city. So when the Japs left, we had the freedom to go into town.

And the Japs had paid us off in this paper money. And we didn't know that the yen had any value. We thought it was just worthless.

So we went into town with this money and bought this old bull. I think we paid nine or ten thousand yen for him. We brought him back into camp.

We had an old rope and we brought him back into camp. So we were going to cook him. Well, it was about dark, and we had a great big black pot, you know, that we'd cook rice and stuff in.

So we had the water boiling. We were trying to kill this old bull. And all we had was a wooden mat.

And all of us were just, you know, we weren't very strong. And we'd hit this bull over the head with a mallet. And we'd take turns and we'd take turns.

And I guess we did that for five or six hours before we finally got that old bull down. And somebody found an old knife that was rusty and everything, but it did have some edge on it. We were able to slit his throat and kill the bull.

So we skinned him and we put him in the pot. And by about 8 o'clock the next morning, the meat was done enough for us to eat. That was a tough bull.

That was a tough bull, but that sure was good because we'd had no meat, you know, for ages. But you remember experiences like that.

[Speaker 2]

Of course. Do you remember the first Americans you saw?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. The Americans came in there, and of course they looked right through us.

[Speaker 2]

Had they flown in or come in by boat? They came in by ship.

[Speaker 1]

And one of the experiences when we, when they finally got us all ready to go ashore on this hospital ship, and they took us in LCIs ashore out to the ship, and they had spotlights on the ship, and of course we didn't, when they had dropped all this food, we didn't want to give up anything. We didn't want to give up. We were collecting that food, and they said, throw it away, we'll get all we want to eat.

But anyway, there were about six or so nurses up on the bridge of the hospital ship when we were coming in to go aboard. And we looked up there, and every one of those girls looked like movie stars to us. We had not seen anything so beautiful in all our lives.

So they got us aboard, and they got us in the shower, and got us all cleaned off, and threw away the quon cans that we had, and things in it and so forth. And we stayed on the hospital ship for about one night, and then they took us by ship from there to Philippines.

[Speaker 2]

It must have been a real, such a reversal for you to have somebody treating you kindly rather than cruelly.

[Speaker 1]

It was just unbelievable. You couldn't, it was hard to imagine that we were in the hands of the Americans and a good fortune, and that we could go down in the galley and eat all we wanted to eat at any time, at anything that was down there. And you'd go down in the galley, and you'd eat, and you'd come back, and it's comfortable.

Discard, you know, and go back down and eat again. And you'd sleep a couple hours, and then you'd go back and eat some more. And it was a great period of time.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, everybody must have looked good to you. Everybody looked good.

[Speaker 1]

Everything looked good. And, of course, we were anxious to catch up on the news because we experienced little or no news all that period of time, what had happened.

[Speaker 2]

Lots of changes in the country. Roosevelt had died. The atomic bomb had gone off.

[Speaker 1]

We didn't know anything about the bomb, of course. So we were there at that deployment staging area outside of Manila for maybe a week. And it was a rainy season, and planes weren't flying.

So we wanted to get on anything that was going in the right direction. So we got aboard a ship and came home on a ship.

[Speaker 2]

We got home late September, early October of 1945. And in San Francisco or Seattle?

[Speaker 1]

San Francisco, yeah. Yeah, that was a great experience. Coming in there, and the band came out to play for us, you know, and flags were flying.

Happy time.

[Speaker 2]

Yep. I remember how many of you there were on the ship. Was it hundreds or dozens?

You mean on the ship coming down?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, we were loaded with soldiers, not all prisoners. Not all prisoners. No, but primarily prisoners.

Yeah. A lot of... We were getting some money.

And according to the rank, I think, field grade officers got so much, company grade officers got so much. Were you a lieutenant or captain?

[Speaker 2]

Captain.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. And enlisted me. Sergeants got so much enlisted.

So the poker game started. And some of those guys lost all of their back pay. Not all their back pay.

All the cash they had. Well, they gave IOUs for a lot of it. Whether those were ever collected, I don't know.

I hope not. But, anyway, lots of poker games going on on the ship coming back.

[Speaker 2]

Did you play some poker yourself? Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. I had... We were playing table stakes.

And I had... I was maybe ahead a couple thousand dollars. And we were playing draw poker.

And I guess I had fourteen, fifteen hundred dollars in front of me. So... That's how thinking began.

And I had two pair going in. And drew one card. And I had kings and fours.

Three kings, two fours. So we ran the pot up. And there was a second lieutenant in the Air Force.

And he had drawn three cards. And so when we got through and all the money that was on the table between the two of us was in there, there was nearly five thousand dollars in the pot. And that was a lot of money.

And I just knew. I saw me driving down the road getting that good, good convertible. I knew I had won that.

That guy had two queens and he had drawn two queens. Now, you know the odds of a stack. Drawn three cards and drawn two queens and drew a pair.

So I was still a little ahead and I got out of the poker game. I didn't play any more poker. You didn't get the Buick Convertible.

I didn't get the Buick Convertible. But you got home. I got home.

And... I was from a little town in Missouri. And Chevrolet dealer was a good friend.

And he wanted... And you know, in those days you had to be in line to get a car. So he wanted to give me a car and put the picture in the paper.

My dad said, No, son. He said, You're going to take your turn and you're going to put in for a car and when your turn comes, you get a car. And you know, in those days you did what your parents said.

Even though you were out of college. So that's exactly what happened. I waited my turn to get a car.

But I thought that was pretty tough. But I survived that, too.

[Speaker 2]

How did you get back from the west coast to Missouri? By train?

[Speaker 1]

On the train. Yeah. We went first up to Swannanoa up near Asheville.

Oh, yeah. And we were there. And then they released us and I went home for maybe two weeks.

And then went back. In the meantime, my wife had joined the Marine Corps. She was a night trainer instructor.

My brother had joined the Marine Corps and they were both at Cherry Point. And so we decided to get married in January. So she got leaving.

My brother went AWOL and came home. And we got married. And then we all went back to Cherry Point.

Were you discharged? No. So I had, you know, they did a lot of testing at Swannanoa.

And then finally, I had all of that terminal leave. And then I went back to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas and was discharged there. And I still had some more leave.

So I had a pretty long time. And I came back to my career in the insurance business before the leave was over.

[Speaker 2]

When you were in North Carolina, did, well, a broader question, did you ever see or write to the relatives of the best friend that you lost?

[Speaker 1]

Yes. I went down to a little town in the eastern part of the state. This boy's name was John K-E-R-R Carp.

And John's mother, John's father was deceased, and his mother had been the postmistress in this little town. And shortly after, when I was discharged from Swannanoa, Camp Moore General Hospital, we went down to visit John's mother and spent the night and talked to her about John and what a great fellow he was and our friendship and experiences. And most of my friends happened to be from north and south Carolina.

And I had another friend who was from Martinsville, Virginia. And I went up to see his parents in this community. So I did have that opportunity to tell the parents a little bit about them and their experiences.

[Speaker 2]

It was a good thing for them, a hard thing for you.

[Speaker 1]

Very hard, but very much appreciated by them.

[Speaker 2]

You must have, you couldn't have gone through this without developing some pretty strong feelings about the Japanese.

[Speaker 1]

A lot of people ask me that question, and yes, that's true. I had some very strong opinions. But the Japanese military ruled the country.

They made all the decisions. And the civilian population had no say so in what was going on during the war. And so my ill will or my feeling has been pretty much directed to the military.

And I don't hold any animosity towards the Japanese civilian population as such. But I do recognize that our treatment was very unfair and very cruel. I don't have any sympathy for the Japanese military.

But I think, you know, the more time that goes by, you try to take a Christian attitude about these things. And understand that the people today had nothing to do with that. And they

don't, at my age, the people that I talk to or the Japanese, they don't even know anything about what went on in World War II.

[Speaker 2]

Maybe they should.

[Speaker 1]

Well, I think they should. But if you weren't involved in it, and maybe it was only your grandparents who were involved in it, they've lost touch. And I don't think the Japanese are anxious to talk about the history, family to family, about the war, except about the bad things that happened to them because of the atomic bomb.

[Speaker 2]

You probably, and again, this is a question that I've asked, or people have talked to me about. There must be some, not question in your mind, but you must note that you made it and other people didn't. And that, it seems to me, must be a kind of hard thing to deal with.

[Speaker 1]

Yes. It's a very hard thing to deal with. But when the man is dead, he goes on to another life.

The hard part is for the survivors. And I know that I have two brothers. Both were Marines.

Both made it through. But both died. One boy at 60 and one at 61, and they were close together.

Both of those boys were survived by my mother, and my mother said to me, Jim, you just don't know how difficult it is to lose a son. And so you think of those experiences of how the young soldier was killed and how a parent had many years to live to think about that. Although I feel very strongly that those of us who fought and those who died, died for a good cause.

I would hate to think what the world would have been like if the Russians and the Germans and the Japanese regimes had won. It might have taken a long time for us to get back to a democratic way of life.

[Speaker 2]

I always ask towards the end of an interview, is there anything else you can think about that you want to be sure that I know? How long has it been tough? An hour and a half.

[Speaker 1]

Well, I don't think so. I don't know whether anybody can relate the thrill and the experience of coming back to family and friends. And I think as we spoke, you can't dodge the bullet, but the experience of having grown up in a strong family where there was a lot of love and a lot of desire to come back to that circumstance and a strong belief in God and help me get back.

So I'm just very thankful that I was born lucky. This was about a year ago. My grandson Pete was home at Christmas time and he was into my World War II memorabilia.

So he was very fascinated with it. So he said to me, he said, Grandpa, could I take this back to my school to show and tell? How old is Pete?

Pete was then six years old. So I said, yeah, Pete, you can do that. And he said, oh, Grandpa, that's great.

And he had gotten things down pretty well. So I said, well, Pete, in fact, I'll tell you. I said, you are so interested in this, so interested in it that my boy's married it.

When I die, I'll leave these medals and things to you. And he said, Grandpa, he said, that's great. He said, I hope you don't die too soon.

And I said, well, Pete, I agree with that. I hope I don't either. So he took them to school to show and tell.

And that evening, his best buddy Kevin's father called my daughter. And they live in the same neighborhood. And he said, Katie, Kevin said that Peter said that his grandpa won these medals in the Civil War.

And when I heard that, I just rolled on the floor.

[Speaker 2]

Pete's got the right idea. It's just wrong.

[Speaker 1]

He got the title wrong. His title and his time was a little bit off. But I thought that was so cute.

[Speaker 2]

You know, it frequently is the case that grandchildren will pick up an interest more than children did. For some reason or other, that interest sometimes skips a generation.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Another thing that happened during our wedding ceremony, my wife, I brought back a Japanese sword. And at the cake-cutting ceremony, she had, as I told you, come home from Church Point, Cherry Point, for the wedding.

Somehow she had gotten ahold of my sword and she decided to cut the cake with that sword. So we did. And I set the sword down, and I thought somebody was going to take it and clean it off.

She stepped back and scattered it all away. Icing from the cake. It almost got divorced on the scene.

So we laughed about that.

[Speaker 2]

How did you pick up the sword?

[Speaker 1]

Well, you know, when the Americans came in, and two weeks before that, the Japanese had left. But they were pretty frightened at that time. And we got ahold of some of their weapons.

Not pistols, but swords and things like that. They were willing to give it up.

[Speaker 2]

You still have the sword? Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

There was something advertised in a magazine that I picked up, where there was a guy in Pekin, Illinois, saying that he would pay between \$200,000 and \$200,000 for a Japanese sword. But this was not the sword of an officer. This was probably a sergeant's sword, and it had been stepped back and scattered.

It had some rust spots on it. I didn't think it was... For \$200, I'd keep it.

Keep it? Yeah. Keep it.

Yeah.