Daniels, Clarence J. Interview pt 2 8-29-84

[Speaker 2]
August 29th, 1984.

[Speaker 1]
And they let some of us go back down there, and we had a water ticket down there. And they let some of us in some water. And I don't know what happened to him, but there was one Japanese soldier, and he used to come completely apart somewhere, and he used to start to harness balls and roll them around, and suckle his comrades, and drag them, and slap them, and whatnot.

And one brought out a epidemic needle, and he was shot. And he cried out, I don't know what his problem was. And then a little later, there was a little old bat, he must have been a journalist, at least apparently.

And he came down there on a horse, and he got off his horse, and the boy brought him a folding chair and sat down there with him. And a couple of other characters come and sit down there, and sat him with an automatic rifle. And he talked to some other Japanese officers.

Just sort of good comparisons, you know. And eventually he got up and went on down. That's his horse there.

He went on down, and this orderly folded up that chair and took off after him. In case you want to check that. Anyway, we sat there until it got dark.

And we didn't have nothing to eat. Because now we, this particular group that I was in, had it easy compared to some of these others. Because they, from what I've heard from other guys in my outfit, you know, they were good people as well.

But we sat there, and then along it got dark. And there was somebody, some Japanese, they told us we were supposed to get up and start moving on, you know. And some Japanese up on the upper side of the road in the woods, they were calling him Come-Away Joe.

Come-Away Joe. In the Philippines, an American called a Filipino Joe. And a Filipino called an American Joe.

But Filipinos didn't call each other Joe. They say it, and I don't know if it should be true, but they said that they called him, and the filibuter who was dressed in a Filipino uniform called him another Filipino Joe, you know. A Japanese Joe, not a Filipino.

And they also said that they could spot a Japanese infiltrator, you know, somebody trying, some Jap trying to disguise himself as a Filipino. And if they were suspicious of him, they could say hula hula. Couldn't do it.

There's a place in the Bible where there's something, the word shibboleth, you know. I don't know the exact story, but they made these people say the particular word, and they couldn't say it, so they knew they were the enemy. Anyway, we walked a little way that night, and then they got us off the road again.

What they were doing, they were trying to get us out of there and get their equipment and then down to the end of the peninsula for their operation against Trigodor, about three miles out. Anyway, they got us off the road. The next morning we started off again.

And it was the day before that. It was how we were setting up our wake. We had some artillery shells coming in.

And we didn't have any of our clothes, but we sort of shook it up and walked the Japanese down. Down on, down outside of the drone line on the beach where it was, where they must have had a place like that. Anyway, they set up a battery, and they lobbed a few shells over Trigodor.

And they had these columns of killed enemies, you know, killed enemies. There were a few of them, killed enemies. One guy at the same time just pulled behind him.

I wasn't there, because I heard that. But they figured that since Trigodor could see them, they figured they'd just throw a few shells over on Trigodor and watch what Trigodor did. And he took care of that battery, and he killed some girls and killed others too.

Anyway, we went the next morning and started walking. And I had a feeling it was a high-stock Filipino truck. And there was an old white lady, an old woman laying on the ground outside.

I don't know what she was there. She was in the middle of all the rocks, and she had music playing on the radio. She was laying on the ground.

I don't know what she was doing. She was smoking, I think. And I remember seeing that same woman, a young Filipino in a truck.

She was pretty. She was tied in the truck. That might be it.

The truck's roof was blown. They executed some officers. Filipino officers or American?

[Speaker 2]
Filipino officers. Did you see any difference in the way they treated the Filipinos and the way they treated the Americans, or was it pretty much the same thing?

[Speaker 1]
It stopped. I was on that march about. And it's not a long way.

An American infantryman can make it in a couple of days, you know, in good shape. If I'm out, I guess. If I'm out.

See the road run from Marveli around the peninsula up to San Fernando. But from Marveli up to San Fernando, which is about 6 miles if I'm wrong. But what compounded the situation was that they didn't give us nothing to eat and nothing to drink, no water.

And most of the Americans and the Filipinos too were already running down low rations for about five months there. And they had malaria. And if you couldn't keep up, well, they'd ban it, you know.

If you stopped at the, after you got out of the towns, or whatever it was, they were more or less established towns and they had water tickets and things, but they wouldn't let you stop. Some of them would, they would let you stop getting anything. But if you got too big a crowd around the water ticket, well, they would come with a ban at you.

It was kind of a risky kind of thing. I was on there about six days, I think. And they just grabbed us off to let their people come out and they were quick.

[Speaker 2]
Did the Filipinos try to give you food?

[Speaker 1]
Yeah, they did. After we got to their towns, you know. Of course, on the town, most of the towns were gone.

You know, they were, people had left them. On the town, Boris Brown, I don't know when he was, January or February, they wanted to detail a bunch of food, but from our outfit, to go up near the front lines to a town that had been evacuated to the water, to get some food, some corrugated tin, to build some sheds. On the town, the Americans set up machine shops.

One night, you know, that they put together some programs to set up the sheds and what supplies they had. They wanted people to go up there and get some of this tin, corrugated tin that the Filipinos had. I went up there in a truck, I don't know if it was a 5'6", but we went up there.

And the town looked like this, and it was empty. And I remember seeing kids' homework on a tablet in the street there, you know, Old Turk Street. And we found a print shop.

There had been a print shop in there which interested me because I was a printer before. And it was the only place I ever saw an artillery shell in motion. We was coming back, and we heard this boom over there, and we got out of the truck and got off to the side back there.

We waited a few minutes. And over there, somewhere over there, there was a gun shooting this way. And if you watch real carefully, you can see some sunlight on that shell.

It's in the wind. It's in the wind. You can hear that gun dropping, and you can see that little specks of light shooting through the air.

It was the only time I ever saw that. Of course, I've seen bombs fall. But that's the only time I ever saw an artillery shell in motion.

The light was just right. But anyway, back to the march. There was a fellow I knew who graduated from high school, Mr. George Smith, and he went to the Philippines before I did. And I didn't, I knew he was older. He was in the 2nd Army Special Squadron with Nicholas

Field. And the evening we, the afternoon we left Manila, I saw him on the docks down there in Manila, and he had a shotgun.

He didn't have no rifle. They'd run out of rifles and stuff, and he'd quicken with a shotgun. And we sat down and talked until we got there.

And I didn't see him anymore until, when I grew up with him, I went to grade school, first grade, home field high school. And we played together. And he didn't live no farther from here to that house down there.

Then the rain came on the town, on the march out, and he had a bottle where he'd rigged up some strings on the canteen, the little brown box, and it was in that canteen. And then it got separated from somewhere. And one night, when we were together, they crowded us off into a field, and somebody said they'd found some turnips.

And he dug up some turnips in that field, and everybody started digging. Me and George started digging, and he dug us up a couple of turnips. And it was an awful stench everywhere we was waiting.

And the next morning, someone dug a soldier's gun down and he was shooting people close. Anyway, they fed us stock. I think my group did.

Me, I got about one meal all in six days. But I ran across a fuel pack. Somebody dropped a fuel pack on the side of the road, and I picked it up and carried it and rambled through it, and I found some lions.

And it was lions, about six lions. And they were coming and heading. And not far from that fuel pack, I never saw anybody killed, but I saw them after they were killed.

And a little ways beyond that, that fuel pack, there was a Filipino laying there, and he was wearing everything, stunts and batteries, and he had a group of red flies all over his stunts, and he was holding something and he was dead. And the weirdest thing, I joined the Army with a fellow named Bill Duncan over in Loma. He was from the tribe where we joined the Army together.

And he was in the same company with the Filipinos together. And they were pretty good acquaintances, pretty good friends. And we shared stuff from time.

We got ahold of some dates, some candy dates, and liked to kill them. I read. Anyway, we were getting pretty close to San Fernando, and Bill and Harley dragged along.

We got in his office. They come by in a car, and they were trying. Yeah.

In the backseat, we had a chauffeur. He had a sword laying on. Duncan tried to talk to him, but he didn't know any English.

He was a very good guy.

[Speaker 2]
Any idea why he was a decent guy?

[Speaker 1]
He was a decent person, and I guess he gave us about a ten-mile ride. What's the difference? He did at that time.

He did? Yeah, because his feet was all swollen. He didn't dare take his shoes off.

If you took your shoes off, and they cut you off at the restaurant, you went to sleep, unless you had your shoes, you know. Anyway, we finally got to San Fernando, and they gave us another meal. And what they did, they had these Filipinos cooking.

Filipino Army equipment, kitchen equipment, consisted of a really, really huge iron pot that they cooked rice in. And they had this pot full of rice that they'd cook, and they was cooking another pot over there, or something, and they'd stir it with a shovel. I don't know.

It was real gunny stuff. It was just sort of like wallpaper paste, you know, but it's good. And they had this whole handful of old rock salt on it, you know, and that's what helped the salt.

The lack of salt killed a lot of people. After we got to Camp O'Donnell, the first camp we went to, there were these guys standing there with their clothes streaked with salt, you know, and they were bad. Just dehydrated, you know.

But anyway, we got to San Fernando, and they drove us in and put us on some boxcars. We got to see some boxcars to a place called Cappus. And at Cappus, they'd drive you in the boxcar and shut the door on you.

I mean, and they'd stop, and I don't remember how long that trip was in the boxcar. But we got to Cappus, and got out, and we were sitting alongside the railroad track, and there was some fair-skinned old woman. She might have been, like, in the streets that way.

I had, you know, but she was pregnant, and we just had a person. But she'd come along, and she was well-dressed, and she had a collar on, you know, and about, like, day and night. And she had a servant with her.

A fair-skinned old servant with a basket. And he was doing that tricky stuff with a pillow. And she must have ignored him that night.

She did. Anyway, we walked, I must have been about seven miles further to a place called O'Donnell. Camp O'Donnell.

It was a former Philippine Army camp. And they, they was kind of a heel, you know, sort of the indentation of, you know, sloping grounds, Philippine barracks was over there. And they got a neat thatch and that.

And on this heel there, they had this character, like in this welcome speech, you know, Stephanie, you know, when he told us that we were not prisoners but we were captives. And that, I remember a lot of, he said quite a few things. One that he said is that by the grace of God and the permission of the Emperor, we were still alive.

You know. He may have been right on that permission, but by the grace of God, he may have been right on that.

[Speaker 2]
I don't know. It's not too comforting. I don't know.

[Speaker 1]
Anyway, I knew O'Donnell. O'Donnell was the worst because they, they was crabbing in there, you know, they kept coming in. It took a few weeks after that and they were, a lot of them was ready to die anyway.

There was some water stick that you had to stand in line for and usually what you did, you gathered up a bunch of canteens. And they only turned the water on maybe three or four hours a day. You gathered up a bunch of canteens, guys that were sick and unable to get to the spigots, you know, and try to get them some water.

And they, they started feeding rice pretty good. And then they had rice and sweet potatoes. They had to steam the sweet potatoes in these big pots.

They had to put water in the bottom and then they'd put a wooden platform thing down there and put the sweet potatoes on there and let the water steam them. Steam them too? And cover them with gum sacks, you know.

And the Japanese were doing the cooking or you were doing the American cooking? Yeah, yeah. And the rations weren't too bad because there were a lot of people that couldn't do it.

You'd take your musket and their musket through the line one time and get them so-and-so's job on it. If you could do it, if you could take it back then, you couldn't do it as good as they did. I mean, it's probably made up.

I don't know where he was from. I think he was from Pennsylvania. But anyway, he was that way.

He didn't need to, he just couldn't, he couldn't do it that way. They had a building up on a little hill, a big building, and this building was still, it was still in posture but it wasn't much posture. It was kind of bad, you know.

And a lot of people, quite a few of them, crawled underneath it to shave and all that. There was a fellow named Basie, Lou Basie, and he's the, usually, career man, I don't know what he did. He didn't quite, he did boxing, too.

And he crawled underneath it and there was another fellow named Hal. He seemed to me like he was from India. But he was Howard Hal, Hal, H-O-W-A-L-A-L.

He was, before the war, he was the all-American high team, the fine-looking, blonde, young lady. He may have been a corporal. Back then, in our outfit, the rank was kind of scarce.

Most of the ranks were pretty conservative. But Hal, I remember going up there one day to see somebody and there was a cat and the walls, they didn't have a bed, they were just floors. And he got his rope and he caught the wall with it.

The board, it was one board, a thin board. But to get it loose, all you had to do was push on that board and it was dead. He didn't have time to do that.

But I'm sure, I guess as many men and women as there are, there are.

[Speaker 2]
Do you have any sense that if the Japanese had wanted to provide more supplies, they could have treated you better and the money more would have lived?

[Speaker 1]
I'm sure. I'm sure they could have done that. Because they'd come in there and they'd die on the ground, you know.

I knew of one fellow in our outfit that'd come in there and his clothes was all streaked with salt, you know. He died that night. I'm sure he got one.

I'm sure they could have done that. They could have done better by just providing some salt. That would have helped a lot.

Yeah, I think they could have done that. A king, maybe a king, called him Blue Mail. Blue Mail.

Clifford Blue Mail. He was a fine general. He was just a brigadier, I think.

But he had a colon. That would have been somewhat in it, but not in the shape. He was there, and Jones, I know Jones, Parker, I don't know whether Parker was there or not, but Parker was there.

Jones and Parker, I believe, were two corps commanders, but passed for corps. As I understand it, they had, as far as the wing line was connected, they had king in overall command and then the front line was divided into two corps, and Jones was in corps command and Parker was there. I don't believe Parker was there, I don't think they had a whole bunch of them.

Jones was there, Blue Mail was there.

[Speaker 2]
Did they separate out the officers, the university men?

[Speaker 1]
Yeah, they left them.

[Speaker 2]
Were these all Americans in this camp, or were there Filipino soldiers?

[Speaker 1]
Yeah, the Filipino was up on the hill in another section. In a lot of pictures that you see of that time, you'd see a couple of Filipinos, there'd be a line of Filipinos and a couple of them

have a litter with a blanket on it and undoubtedly a body in it. And Toland does the same thing in his captions on his pictures, I think.

But anyway, it says that these Filipinos are carrying one of their comrades into the camp. That's wrong. They're carrying him out dead.

It's a burrow he just went in. But anyway, they died a lot worse than we did.

[Speaker 2]
They were treated worse than the Americans, you think?

[Speaker 1]
Just weaker, generally? Weaker, yeah. And they weren't quite sanitary.

On the march out, they didn't drink out any of the water or anything. They were just drinking off. Anyway, we were there at Toland for about six weeks, I guess.

And then they moved us to another place called Cabanatuan. It was in the central region. Batawan?

Cabanatuan. Cabanatuan? C-A-B-A-N-A-T-U-A-N.

That was about the biggest city in the central region. And things there got bad. They got bad because they let the Americans organize the inside of the camp better.

They divided the camp into groups. Group one, group two, group three, with a mess hall for each one of them. And then they had a separate section for the hospital for the real sick.

At the hospital, they had to get divided. They were the real worst place. They were free to die.

And then the other part was too bad. They combined a lot. Most of my time there was in the kitchen.

I was real lucky. I got a job at the KD. We worked two days.

And then we got off of that. But for the rest of them, they had a farm. They had a big farm.

They raised chickens and chickens. Most of us grew sweet potatoes. That country really grew sweet potatoes.

If you have a field of sweet potatoes, you can go over that field and pull you off a bunch of runners or the ends of the vines, you know, and take them over the other side and stick them in the ground and pretty soon you've got your sweet potato field over there. And big sweet potatoes, too, you know. They were long.

Huge sweet potatoes. They called them Komodes. They were like Benchmen.

Komodes, K-A-M-O-D-E.

[Speaker 2]

Who made the assignments for, say, KP? Was it the Americans?

[Speaker 1]
Yeah, the Americans. The Americans. And O'Donnell, I mean, you know, no one was there.

But at Cabanatawan, the commander of the camp, there was two camps at Cabanatawan. One of them was most of the regular people who came in, who surrendered a month, about a month after we did. But they were on the highway away.

But at our camp, I think he was on the highway, Lieutenant Colonel Beecher. He was in the army. Because they moved, at O'Donnell, they moved out all the four colonels and the general officers to another camp.

They got used to it. Some of them, Wainwright, I think, they teamed, I think now they went to the most of Taiwan there. And then later on to another camp.

I'm not sure, I believe that's right. But we only had one full colonel at Cabanatawan, and then they moved him to O'Donnell. He was captured later.

His name was Sharp, not Sharp. But they moved him and the highest ranking officers that you had in the camp. Hard K.

Johnson, who later became Chief of Staff. He was a splouse at the camp. Can you imagine being a splouse in a military camp?

Fat Matt, he was a corps commander later on. I don't know what corps he was. What's a corps commander?

A force corps commander. So you like easy things to plan. Trapped in easy stuff.

There was a fellow named Fitch. Alva A. Fitch.

And he was a mess officer for his kitchen. I worked there most of the time. He later became a lieutenant general in the Army Intelligence.

He was a sharp person. There was quite a few guys. We had a fellow named Beyonce.

Captain Beyonce. We went and met a lot of them. Getting some Filipinos out of the tank trap in the tanks.

We called them bulls, because we used quite a character. But I worked in the kitchen most of the time. Got sick.

[Speaker 2]
By this time the hospital wasn't just a place that people went to die. The Japanese?

[Speaker 1]
No, the Americans. Did you get Red Cross supplies? We got...

At the time, I had two years. And we got Red Cross packages about three times. It was a box of groceries, what it was.

A can of corned beef, prunes, which we didn't eat. Didn't eat prunes. And powdered milk.

We called it soluble coffee, or instant coffee, but it was a little bit around two. About two-thirds of it was steel. About the size of a cylinder.

What else was in there? I remember corned beef and prunes and powdered milk and coffee. Cheese.

We had some cheese. They come in the low rounds. But we got about this kind.

[Speaker 2]
Were you getting any news from the outside? Did you have any idea what was going on?

[Speaker 1]
Patton loved those big guys.

[Speaker 2]
No wireless radio?

[Speaker 1]
Any idea? Rumors, all kinds of rumors. One day we had a fellow named Wayman, Glenn Wayman.

I think he's from Louisville. He said, let's start a saloon. It was about the middle of 1943.

He said, we'll just start a saloon and see what happens. He was working in the kitchen. There was some character coming along that wasn't working in the kitchen.

Wayman told him, there was a fellow in here the other day that had to go over there to get some rice details. They sent a detail over there to a Japanese dealer. An American dealer with a Japanese car.

He'd get rice and other supplies. He said, this guy, Ernest Roosevelt, is dying. He was about 44.

Ladies, everybody knew Roosevelt. Didn't know who succeeded him, but Roosevelt did. It was ironclad sense.

[Speaker 2]
Well, when you've got no news, then rumors are all you've got.

[Speaker 1]
He got pretty decent there compared to... At one time, they let us have entertainment. Put on a show or something?

Somewhere or other. They got a little old piano. Saxophone.

Some real talented guys in there. They put on skits. I left there in August of 44.

Near there, they'd start selling art. Japanese art. And they took some of it.

All the time. All the time. They'd come around every so often.

You know, every once in a while they'd gather up a few hundred men to ship out to Japan. Japan mostly. Some of them went to Davao, down in the mountains.

Southern. But anyway, they were building this airplane. I still wouldn't eat it.

We took their food out there and cooked. People can't rise to see what they're doing.

[Speaker 2]
There are people from the camp that are working in the airfields?

[Speaker 1]
And then... I don't know. It must have been in July.

They quit that. Maybe it's because the general was working on it or something. Or maybe abandoned it altogether.

But in August, they... I was really lucky because they gathered up about 1,200 men. By that time, the population was getting kind of low.

I don't know what it was. But they gathered up about 1,200 men to go to Japan. I wasn't one of them.

But a couple of friends of mine were. And I was getting kind of restless. So I wanted to get to go.

It sounded kind of stupid to me. And I went. We went down to Manila.

They had already gone. The main body had gone. But they had come back up.

And they said some of these guys, a few of these guys were getting sick. You know what I mean? I said, yeah.

Went down that night. In a truck. We went through the town of Bandawan.

And across the road, sorry, there was a Japanese guard, a standing guard. He was building a car. And he got one of these big old pots that you could put rice in and pump it up with a stick over that fire, you know?

So if he had any problems with his... Somebody was yelling about these blackouts. I don't know if they ever did a blackout before.

We hadn't seen them at the time. But it was, right? He'd kick that stick out and cover his fire.

Now that's a... The word curfew, that's what it means. Cover the fire.

French derivation. It means cover the fire. Now he was caught in a curfew situation.

Anyway, we went down to Billabid. It's an old... It was an old famous prison in Manila.

And we were there for a couple of days. And then we went on a Japanese freighter to Japan.

[Speaker 2]
Were you told what you would be doing in Japan? Just in another camp?

[Speaker 1]
No, we were just going to Japan. And actually, on the way, we met with Moto Maru. Noto?

Noto Maru. And that thing got sunk at the Battle for Lady Dog. Later, you know, that was in August, and Lady was in October, wasn't it?

The reason they say I was lucky was because after that, these Japanese freighters that was taking fuel, they was to Japan, and they was sinking in Manila. We had a sudden scare where they dropped some dead charges on us. There was fish that was swamped around.

They grabbed us down in a hole, and they stepped on our knees and somebody else's back all the time. I guess it must have been about six days. We went in a convoy.

There was a pretty good-sized Japanese liner of some kind. They let us up on deck a couple of times, and we had a great old big wooden pot in the middle of the roof back where the toilets were, and they had to go wash that thing up. I never even got to get on that thing there.

But anyway, we went to Japan, and we got up there on the 1st of September. I was there a year because I come back down to Tokyo on the 6th of September in 1945.

[Speaker 2]
Where were you before that for the camping?

[Speaker 1]
In Western Honshu on the coast. There was a little place called Omachi. It was near a bigger town of Takeoka.

It was on the bay, almost on the bay of Toyama. In Omachi, we worked in a steel mill. You worked in a steel mill?

Yeah, and it was pretty rough because they done the same thing, but it was kind of productive. They'd work five days in a day shift, and then we all took 18 hours, and then we'd go to Omachi and work there two or three nights. And then Omachi, they just kept your sleeping schedule going.

And they done it the same way in Japan.

[Speaker 2]
Did they feed you any better?

[Speaker 1]
Yeah, they did pretty good food. It was about what they got. And it was a good camp because they fed us.

They fed us before we got there. New construction. And we ate pretty good.

We didn't get fat, but we ate my favorite. And the steel mill was an old, hot thing. Well, it was old compared to our standards.

It wasn't a steel mill. It was an amnesium mill. They processed the magnesium, and then they took the magnesium on over to another plant to mix it in the process of manufacturing steel.

What they had was stale wood carbons and very huge carbon columns hanging down into a pit, a brick-lined pit. And they'd pile ore around these carbons and send electricity down these carbon columns, and that would melt this ore, you know. And they had them down at the bottom.

That was on one level. And then down at the bottom, they had a place where they'd poke a hole and let it pour out into slabs, you know. And then when it poured out into slabs, they'd come along after a few minutes and throw an iron rod in there.

And then after Greedy got hired, these kids were lying in the sand, and they'd come on a crane and wrap a chain around that iron rod and lift that slab up and take it out in the center of the floor and break it apart. And, you know, it's like that. And then you'd have the animals over there just to break through that and get the sand in and get the good stuff.

They took it away from there.

[Speaker 2]
Did you do a variety of jobs in the steel mill?

[Speaker 1]
No, just mostly... What you had to do was shovel this ore up there and when it happened, when it poured, it was his hot work. Around these carbon columns, gas would collect, and it would blow up, you know, and start swinging up.

Overall, replacing that, Greedy would go on a poker like thing and let him reach in there and loosen that up and let that gas out some way so it would quiet him down, you know. And it was hard work because it was 12 hours, but it was not actually 12 hours because it was so hot up there on this furnace line. You'd only stay about an hour.

And they divided the scene. It was not only a day and a night shift, but on each shift, they divided you into two groups. One group would work on the furnace line while the other group would rest.

[Speaker 2]
Were you seeing any American planes by this time coming over? No, not at all. Your steel plant wasn't bombed or anything?

[Speaker 1]
It's on the western coast of Honshu and it's not like Tokyo and that's a part of the country. But we did. Long about the middle of November, we got there in September, and there were a few, I guess in November, there was 150 of us.

They broke this big detail up into they sent some to steel mills, some to coal mines, some to docks and different places. But they only sent 150 of us up right there. But long about December or November, I don't remember which, they brought 150 machines with them.

And they had been captured and surrendered at Hong Kong before we were defeated. And they had a fellow in there and his name was Third, Tommy Third, and he could read Japanese. I don't know where he got it or whatever.

And they'd find scraps of newspapers and he'd take it to Tommy Third and he'd translate it. And most of the time it wasn't very good. But we had a lieutenant, the first lieutenant named Sense, who was the camp commander.

He was from the Philippines. He was from California, but he was in the Coast Guard camp in the Philippines. He was on Fort Frank, on Fort Pine Island in Alabama.

And he was the camp commander for, I guess, maybe up until January. And then they brought him in and made him lieutenant commander. He was ranked Sense.

But he also moved to a more jobless position, Sense. No Sense wasn't stupid. This fellow, we found a scrap, somebody found a scrap of paper and gave it to Tommy Third.

And he was, I'd like to think, I guess, maybe March, April, something along the lines of May of 1945. And it had some references to Open Island. And this maybe man, he knew where Open Island was.

But that picks up some things, you know. And then along, I guess, about the, I guess it must have been about the middle of July, they had some, I don't really know how long. I still haven't seen the plane.

I don't know why not.

[Speaker 4]
At this point, go about halfway through the tape where the, go about halfway through the tape before the interview picks up again. Go about halfway through the tape before the interview picks up again.

[Speaker 2]
Go about halfway through the tape before the interview picks up again. That must have been a really interesting feeling.

[Speaker 1]
I thought, now if he had a shovel, this chap had a shovel, you know, he didn't, I don't know, call him Dommie Dommie, you know, being stupid, you know. Told him to hurry up, you know. And he just kept that on working.

And I was going to shoot him, you know. I was getting ready to shoot him with that rifle. And effectively this guy come back, you know.

And I told him, I said, that son of a bitch wouldn't do anything. I just kept running and working, you know. I said, I'll just shot him with this.

And he said, you wouldn't shot him with that. And then he got the bullet in. But there was a big old black man there.

And he was either a corporal or a sergeant. But he had about ten Japanese prisoners there one morning. And he was lined up trying to take him to work somewhere, you know.

And he wanted to do about face. And they wanted to do about face. And he wasn't about face, was he?

[Speaker 5]
About face.

[Speaker 1]
And they stood there looking at him. He hardly could. And he grabbed one of them.

He said, when I say about face, I mean turn around. He finally got him moving, you know. They had a big Filipino, I mean a Japanese sergeant.

He had one, I don't know what his name was. We called him Speedo, Big Speedo. Because that was his favorite expression when he heard it, Speedo, Speedo.

They brought a bunch of Colonies and I reckon in their army, you know, for guarding. And he had them out there one day trying to give them command of some kind. And one of them wasn't too responsive.

He was kind of slow. And that Japanese sergeant picked up a board there and hit him along the shoulder.

[Speaker 5]
What do they know?

[Speaker 1]
Well, they're all mean.

[Speaker 2]
Well, I don't know. If they treated their own people like that, they must have been very rough on you.

[Speaker 3]
Yeah, they did. They treated their own people that way.

[Speaker 1]
They were pretty cash conscious, too. You know, officers didn't really do much. Well, in the American army they didn't do much.

But, you know, they treated you like humans.

[Speaker 2]

When did you get back to the States?

[Speaker 1]
In November of 1945.

[Speaker 2]
Had you pretty well got your weight back by then?

[Speaker 1]
Yeah. I was in Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco for about a couple weeks. And then come to Nichols General Hospital in Louisville, Ohio.

And I was home, got home to Eastern Kentucky for Christmas. And then went back to Louisville and was discharged there in January of 1946. I started school in the University of Kentucky in February of 1946.

Well, I had malaria for a long time. Before we moved up here. We lived at the lower end of the street for about a year.

I guess it was about 50 years. Since then I haven't had it.

[Speaker 2]
There are kinds of malaria, I understand, that were recurrent like that. You'd go away and come back.

[Speaker 1]
Yeah, go away. The kind I had in the Philippines was about one. You'd go away and come back in a week's time.

You could almost count it. It's this Monday, it's Monday morning.

[Speaker 2]
It's time to get malaria again.

[Speaker 1]
Yeah, let me get a stack, you know.

[Speaker 2]
I imagine everybody who made it through wondered, with so many people who didn't, wondered what it was that enabled them. Why they made it through when somebody else didn't.

[Speaker 1]
Well, I'd wondered that. I thought a hillbilly would have had a better constitution than some of these city people. But I'm convinced now that...

I'm a member of Mr. Bogdanoff's church. And I'm convinced now that it was a prayer that done it for me. Because I didn't know it until a couple years ago.

My sister... We lived at a place called McRobertson, Kentucky. Jenkins, Kentucky.

It's in the western counties. It's a coal mine in Kentucky. And she told me that during the war, at McRobertson, that the people in the community would have prayer meetings.

And they would pray for the people in safety that were overseas. And they would pray for them individually, by name. And because I had a message.

I wasn't a strong man. But I loved it. I loved doing it.

This business of father doing a trip to Japan. I didn't have a trip to Japan. I could wait and got on one of the other ships where they got bombed and sunk and everything, you know.

There was one ship. I think there was about 1,800 prisoners on it that left in October. The Philippines in October.

And only five of them. And the ship was sunk. And five of them got on some wreckage and got over to China somewhere.

I was 1,800. And there was another ship that left Manila in December. Now, see, they was fighting in Leyte.

Submarines and planes and everything all around them. And that thing, and I believe Beecher was on it. They left in December.

And it got sunk. They got them all before they left the Philippines. They got the surviving prisoners off and got them on another ship.

And they got them to Formosa. And they got bombed up there again. And then by the time they got to Japan, it was the day of the winter.

And they were dying on the ship. Very few of them actually got ashore. And so, I believe some of them got sick.

I remember one time I got sick. And I'd been in the hospital on the hospital side of the camp. And I'd come back.

And this Wayne, this fellow I mentioned a while ago, he was a chief cook in Baker's Fitch. And I'd come back. I didn't want to stay over there.

I wanted to get back on the well side. And they said, well, you don't want to go back over there. I worked on a farm for about a week.

And it was pretty weak. And they had a job at the kitchen of keeping the fire going all night. Because they had to start cooking this rice by 4 o'clock in the morning to feed the men before they went out on the farm.

And the major gave me a job watching this fire. All they had to do was keep it from going out until about 3 or 4 o'clock. They had a bell system.

They had a piece of the railroad rail that rang, you know, maybe a bell, two bells, four bells, all that kind of thing. And on about 4 o'clock in the morning, I was supposed to build a fire up to get the fire going good. So when the cooks come down there, they could do it.

They could work. Well, one day they got in a sack, a couple of sacks of brown sugar. What they did with the brown sugar, they melted it down into syrup, right?

But they didn't put starch in it. They made a sort of a gelatin-like pudding out of it. We called it pudding because it's sweet and starched.

Anyway, they got this couple of sacks of sugar in there. And that major, he kept an eye on all them kitchen personnel when they were stealing sugar. And when I was down there after supper, when they were eating supper, he would help me.

He'd give me some fine iron. He said that sometimes when I needed a change, he would give me what I needed. On the way back, coming up the path, we got these patrols.

They had flashlights, about three of them. They had masks on their faces. And they had flashlights.

They decided to walk through the camp that night, you know, that morning. About three o'clock in the morning. A lot of things ended up three or four minutes early.

You're stealing that brown sugar. One time we had a—and the major wasn't too, you know, alert about it. But they got into brown sugar.

And these guys were stealing it. That was at a different time. But anyway, they had to steal a couple of their sugar pieces.

And they traded them for cigarettes and whatever. And Wayne would come down there. And he had a pretty good-sized little old pen can, right?

And there was a couple named Tom Lloyd. There's an old lady who said to Wayne, Why don't you steal so much of that damn sugar from us? You know, make us look bad.

Wayne said, No, you make us feel dreadful.

[Speaker 3]
He got it all wrong.

[Speaker 2]
I imagine you had a pretty strong dislike for Japanese for quite a long time.

[Speaker 1]
Even in the infamous days. Even in the infamous days. The things that they did, it wasn't necessary.

[Speaker 3]
The unnecessary cruelties. Yeah, yeah. Well, and the hypocrisy of it.

Now, they were... I don't know whether they were signatory to the U.N. Convention or not.

[Speaker 1]

But in their Army Manual, I've read it. They give you a pretty good policy. It wasn't just in the Philippines.

It was in Singapore and Hong Kong and Java and a lot of other places. And I don't think that they changed the policy. They were pretty smooth.

Taking advantage of it. Well, they were taking advantage of American inviolability, I think. This has been Dennis Schmern.

Our school back here. It's a vocational school.

[Speaker 3]
And they...

[Speaker 2]
You've had enough of us talking with Japanese.

[Speaker 3]
They were decent.

[Speaker 2]
Well, I thank you very much. I appreciate you taking the time.