RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALFRED MCGREW

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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HERNDON, VIRGINIA
APRIL 15, 2007

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Elaine Blatt: This begins an interview with Alfred McGrew, on April 15th, in Washington, DC, 2007. All right, so, I would like to start with where and when you were born?

Alfred McGrew: I was born in Columbus, Ohio, in October 25, 1922.

EB: You grew up in Columbus. What was your childhood like?

AM: Of course, I grew up during the depression, and it was totally unlike childhoods are today. I started at school [in West Virginia], we moved there [to Columbus] at a time when I needed to start in the first grade. I had some schooling in West Virginia, so, I went through grade school, junior high school, and high school in Columbus. … What else?

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: What about your father, what had he found for work at that time?

AM: Well, my father, originally, worked on the railroad in the early days, and then when we moved here, to Columbus. He was born in West Virginia, so, consequently, the environment is entirely different. … I forgot what I was going to say.

SH: You were going to tell me what your father did for a living.

AM: Yes, during the Depression it was a very laden times, and he worked on the WPA, [Works Progress Administration] one of President Roosevelt's prizes I guess you might call it. He also worked as an automobile painter. He had a business for quite a long time and he died in 1948, he died [when] he was only fifty-five years old. So, consequently, I didn't get to spend much time with him. After I came back [from the war], it wasn't very long before he passed away. … He was a carpenter, a good one, and a mechanic, and a painter, so he did all of these things.

EB: To support the family.

AM: Yes.

EB: What about your mother, did she stay home and raise the kids?

AM: Yes, my mother always stayed home, and I was the only kid.

EB: You were the only child. So, you graduated from high school in what year?

AM: 1940, I guess, because there was no work. … I had met a kid in junior high school and we became very close together, and we were kind of loners, and we were interested in aircraft and World War I. So, we were stuck together like glue. When we couldn't find work in January 1941, we convinced our parents that we were going to join the Air Force. Well, we found out you had to have two years of college to get in the Air Force at that time, so, that was an out. [We] didn't want the Navy. I had no desire to be in the Navy. So [we] tried the Marine Corps, and my friend wore glasses, and, more or less, at that time, they weren't taking warm bodies, they were being very specific. So, we decided that the US Army was the best thing for us. It was all that was left. We enlisted in January, in Columbus, and immediately we were taken to

the West Coast to a fort, to an island, Angel Island, which was an old quarantine station for the Far East people coming in, like Ellis Island [on the East Coast]. … So, we stayed there until March 22nd, and we sailed to Hawaii, and we didn't get off the boat there, we went on to the Philippines from there. We arrived there April 22nd.

EB: You said you had to convince your parents to join the military.

AM: Yes.

EB: Were they very against it? They didn't want their only son leaving.

AM: Well, my mother was more against it than my father, but, there really wasn't any options. There was no work. You had young kids who were eighteen years old, or so [and no work]. So, anyway, I passed through that stress[full] moment and we enlisted, and they signed for us, both parents, and away we went to the West Coast.

EB: Had you been athletic at all in high school, playing sports?

AM: Yes. I played sports. I played football and baseball, softball. I didn't like basketball, I was too small.

EB: Who was your favorite baseball player?

AM: Probably Babe Ruth was more so than anything else, and Lou Gehrig.

EB: Did you listen to baseball on the radio?

AM: Yes, my father and I.

EB: Did you have a radio in your home, or did you go somewhere else?

AM: We had a radio in our home.

EB: What did your dad think of Roosevelt?

AM: My dad was a tried and true Democrat, and there was very little discussion about that sort of thing around my house, you know, since there were no brothers or sisters, and everything. I'll take a drink once in a while to keep my mouth from getting dry.

SH: Please do. You joined the military then in 1940, before Pearl Harbor.

AM: 1941.

SH: 1941.

AM: January 1941. Pearl Harbor was the end of the year.

SH: Okay, great. I wanted to make sure that we had the chronology correct.

AM: … I was well established in the Philippines, in like April, I went to Corregidor, April 1941.

SH: Did you?

AM: So, I had the rest of that year until December 7th, until the war started. … It was … very excellent, we liked it very much on the island. … I told the enlisting sergeant, "Send us the farthest place you can." [laughter]

EB: Someone else had said that, too. The farthest place was the Philippines, [so] he said he wanted to go the farthest away.

AM: Yes, that's what he did.

EB: Did you think that a war was brewing between America and Japan?

AM: Yes, we were very conscious of the war because we studied that sort of thing between us, and we were knowledgeable of what was happening. We thought going to the Philippines probably would, you know, avoid getting involved in this European fiasco. So, we enjoyed it for a small while. [laughter]

EB: Did you do basic training in California or Hawaii?

AM: Absolutely no training what-so-ever in the United States.

EB: No training.

AM: Once we arrived at Corregidor, they sent us out and we lived in tents, this group off the [USS] *Republic* [AP-33]. We went [over] on the USA2 *Republic*, and we took all our basic training there, close order drill, bayoneting.

EB: Marching?

AM: Yes, we did all of that.

EB: Did you fire a weapon?

AM: Yes, I personally fired a Springfield, the old timers, and a .30 caliber machine gun. That's about the end.

EB: Before the war, you were in Corregidor, did you have drill everyday, or were there days you just hung out? What was daily life like before the war?

AM: Since it is a tropical place, we normally didn't what you call "work all day." We went out in the morning; we might do some drill, and, actually, in the afternoon, half the time, we were off, which we liked.

EB: What did you think of the heat actually, because a couple of guys said they could never get used to the heat?

AM: I loved it.

EB: What about the Filipinos before the war, were they very friendly, did you talk to any?

AM: The Filipinos were much more friendly then they are now. The younger generations have begun to turn over, and only the old Filipinos, that were familiar with us, really were kind to us, and so forth.

EB: Did you give chocolates to the little Filipino kids, or anything like that?

AM: Say that again.

EB: Would you give chocolate candy to the little Filipino kids?

AM: Oh, yes. All soldiers did that, I think. But, we had quite a population on Corregidor, we probably, at that time, had about eight thousand, and a lot of them were Filipino. The Filipino scouts were very excellent soldiers. … I was in Coast Artillery, personally I was in antiaircraft. But the Coast Artillery, some of the guns were manned by Filipino scouts, who had families and so forth, and they had what they called *barrios* sprinkled around Corregidor. The island was only like three and a quarter miles long. But I have photographs of all this stuff. I just brought these along because, there was a couple of people who wanted to see them very badly, and I talked to the one, he's a, what do you call him?

SH: A historian?

AM: He [is] actually, I don't know the word.

EB: A researcher?

AM: He's a researcher, but he's also a book ...

EB: An author?

AM: He's an author and also he markets the books.

EB: Oh, okay. A publisher?

AM: He and I talked last year, so I had a good talk with him last night. He would like to publish my book.

EB: Oh, okay.

AM: I didn't really write it for the purpose of publishing it, I wrote it for my family. But as time has gone on, as you can see, many of these people have written books and some of them are really bad, really bad.

EB: They're just written poorly?

AM: Yes, half of them don't know what they're talking about. It's all jumbled. In my mind, it's clear; in 1942 and 1945, and all the prison camp stuff, but to some of these men it's all cluttered with stories they've heard from other guys, and they generate more junk. So, some of the books are very poor, and I wanted mine to be true. "This is what happened to me, and this is what I saw."

EB: Right.

AM: I don't go over into other areas and write about this kind of junk, because that wasn't my forte in the first place.

EB: That's why we want to know your story, your individual story, and what you did yourself.

SH: Can you describe Corregidor as you remember it? When you first got there, when the ship pulls up, can you just walk us through that?

AM: Yes. It was truly fascinating to my friend and I. A lot of the people on the boat were from the South and they had no education; some of them couldn't even write, and so forth. But we were very interested in the fortifications; we were interested in what the islands, what the purpose was, and then we learned there are three other islands in a string across Manila Bay. We learned about those; that was our type of conversation and interest. So, the stuff you get out of me is true stuff.

EB: We don't doubt that at all.

AM: It's knowledgeable; the trouble is, I can't remember what I did this morning. [laughter] But I can remember fifty, sixty years ago with clarity.

EB: That's how my grandfather was, too.

AM: Yes, surely.

SH: So, when you get off of the boat, and you are this nineteen, or eighteen year old kid.

AM: Yes.

SH: Just turned nineteen maybe, or going to be nineteen. What do you see? Describe Corregidor.

AM: Well, you know, it's a tadpole-shaped island, and the high point is called Top Side and there is quite a bit of fortifications, and barracks, and so forth. Middle Side was where I lived, eventually, after the early events. … Bottom Side was down where the boats land. They had a dock on both sides, North and South dock. It was green and beautiful. You saw fruit hanging around, and they took us out to a place called 92nd Garage. … It was an old seaplane base, had a couple of hangers, but it was all concrete. … They had two strings of tents out there, eight-men squad tents we called them, and that's where we lived during this period, and it was brutal on this concrete at one hundred and five degrees in the shade. But, that's where we took our close-order drill and, you know, we were issued some clothes and we learned bayonet drill. We learned all kinds of close up engagement sort of training, and then, when we finished, we were kept in that area. We didn't dally about. We were kept in that area. Then once we completed the training, then they began to break us up into groups. We had what we called the 59th Coast Artillery and the 60th Coast Artillery.

EB: You and your buddy were in the same place?

AM: Yes, we were in the 60th, but we were split up at this time. He went to A battery, a search light battery, and I went to B battery, which is on Top Side. … I really hadn't gotten settled up there yet until they [split us up]. These twenty-two-hundred guys had come over on the [USS] *Republic*. The part that came to Corregidor, they used them to make new batteries, and they used non-coms from the other batteries to build up the battery, and, of course, they had the knowledge and ability to train men. So, I went to Top Side and it was beautiful up there. It was a very long barracks, which I can show you, and we didn't do anything but go around and pick up cigarette butts, and things like that at first, and about [that] time this terminated, [that's] why I had broke out to a new battery and went to Middle Side. So that's where my entire, really, soldiering took place. I was in H battery and I was a machine gunner and we had three-inch and antiaircraft guns. Our position, we really didn't have a position for the guns, we practiced on a parade ground and learned how to actually operate these three inch antiaircraft guns. So any questions?

EB: About this point so far?

SH: Tell us about what a typical day would be like for you. Did you practice [shooting], did you shoot your guns, and what were you shooting at?

AM: We didn't do much shooting at the beginning.

EB: So, when you were there, were you getting newspaper articles about the war in Europe, or listening to a radio?

AM: We had radios, and we used to listen to KSI, K something I, San Francisco. So we picked up all of this stuff that was coming from the States at this time. When Pearl Harbor happens, and so forth, up to that point we realized, Spence and I realized [what was going on]. The other guys were kind of out in left field about this sort of thing. We learned that since the Germans were

running close by to the East Coast of the United States, they were sinking ships, and so forth, that it was obvious we were going to get in the war with Germany. We didn't know how, or why, but we knew it was going to happen. We thought, "Well, we're over here on our emerald isle, and we really don't care what happens." But, we were interested in it before.

EB: You had said you were really interested in the fortifications and stuff like that, had you spoken to World War I veterans who had come home? Were there any in your town that you had talked to?

AM: No, remember, we were, in essence you [should] regard us as the first veterans. There were these people over in Europe, who were far from us, and all we knew was what was in the newspapers. But, when we went over there, we went over well before Pearl Harbor. … [As] a matter-of-fact, I was sleeping out on the concrete of one of the guns when my friend came running, shook me, and woke me up and said, "You know the Japs had bombed Pearl Harbor." Seven or eight hours later, they bombed in the Philippines.

EB: What were you thinking at that point when you heard Pearl Harbor was bombed? What did you think?

AM: "Watch out." Because we did reason, because we were so interested in this sort of thing, we immediately put two and two together. Our Pacific Navy had got wiped [out], so, consequently, we didn't have anything between us and the United States. There was nothing. … It was obvious that if the Japs had nerve enough to bomb Pearl Harbor, and so forth, that we knew we were going to be mixed up in it very shortly, somehow, because we were so far and remote from the United States and Pearl Harbor.

EB: Did you think they had enough planes to bomb Pearl Harbor, and that quickly to bomb the Philippines?

AM: Oh, yes, they did. They did. Just after Pearl Harbor they bombed Manila and different airports. They were after the airfields, of course. So we started off the war. Our Navy was shot. We had what we called the Pacific Fleet, which amounted to not much, four-stack destroyers, and things, and they were ten miles in toward Manila from Corregidor. So when the Japanese started this early bombing, the first thing they did was wipe out Cavite. Some of those ships were able to get out of there, some of the subs got out, some didn't. So, we had no Navy, and we had no aircraft, because they bombed Clark Field and Nichols Field, and we were without any kind of airplane defense.

SH: When you first heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed, when your friend came to tell you, did the officers or NCOs put you on any kind of alert?

AM: Oh, yes. Matter-of-fact, to tell you the truth, we went on alert late November. Now this was before Pearl Harbor, and they began to instigate some plans, probably that MacArthur and Company had. So, they told us we had to move out of the barracks, our nice, nifty, barracks, and move out and dig gun positions, which we did. I can show you some of these. … It was quite close to our barracks, just across the parade ground, and that's what we did. We immediately

moved everything out, moved all your footlockers and everything out, and we begin to take [our] place, operating an antiaircraft battery. We had four antiaircraft guns and we had machine guns, of course, and we had the power source, and what they did with us is [this]. There was a six-inch gun battery, three big six-inch guns pointing toward the South. It was not manned, so they told us to take that position and we put our guns just in front of these six-inch guns, because they weren't going to use them in the first place, and we used some of the offices, and so forth, and the big gun position. That's how it all started.

EB: So, you were waiting.

SH: This was an operation, like a training operation?

AM: Yes, well, you know, they put us out there. It was going to be training according to the officers, but, it wasn't training according to us, because we saw that this was for real, you know.

EB: What were you thinking at this point? They're coming.

AM: Yes.

EB: Were you nervous or scared?

AM: We knew they were coming, but, we thought we could hold our own with them. Of course, we had some very good men in my battery, which consisted of about one hundred and twenty men.

EB: What did you think of the Japanese at this point? I know a lot of people had mentioned that the military would train you to dislike the enemy, the idea that they were evil. What were you thinking at this point about these people?

AM: Just exactly that.

EB: Did they show you the cartoons with the faces?

AM: Oh, yes. They were coming out with some of this pre-war as a matter-of-fact, just making fun of the whole thing. But, the fun went away after Pearl Harbor, of course. But, we classified Pearl Harbor as a one day affair. That is exactly what it was. They didn't follow up with their bombing, and so forth, but, they did all the damage. But, they didn't do the damage they should have done, like blow up all the fuel storage, and things like that. They passed that up.

SH: The next morning, when they started bombing Manila, how soon were you aware of that?

AM: Well, we are aware of it just as it happened, because we could hear it. It was thirty miles away, but, it's across water, and sound travels across water quite well.

SH: What was your immediate reaction? What did you do then?

AM: Well, we figured that, any minute, the Japs were going to come over and bomb Corregidor. Well, the funny thing was, that after December 7th, they made passes around Corregidor, they would stay out of the range of our antiaircraft guns, but they did this for the whole month. December 31st was the first time they bombed Corregidor. We were firing at some of these that came nearby.

SH: So, they told you to stay where you were?

AM: Yes.

SH: Man your guns. Describe the mood, you expected it any day?

AM: We did.

SH: How long would the watches be if you would stand?

AM: Well, we began to be on twenty-four hour [shifts], you were on duty all of the time. There was always something to do. After we were bombed on December 31st, which was a very severe bombing, and lengthy, we realized that our cables weren't dug deep enough. … Some of the bombs that landed blew up the cables, so we had to repair all of this stuff. So, we were out there, immediately after, digging deeper trenches and this was in like rock, really. That's why they called Corregidor "the rock," I think. But, we were hard at work trying to fortify our battery, and put up camouflage, and things like that, right at the very beginning.

SH: Prior to the 31st of December, when the bombings took place, what were you hearing about what had happened in Manila, and the different air bases?

AM: We were getting all, pretty direct communication.

SH: The communication was good.

AM: Yes, with Cavite, and even some of the towns … in Northern Luzon, on the top of the Philippines.

SH: Was anyone ordered off of Corregidor to another location?

AM: There were men shuffled about. First thing they had to do was, all this Navy personnel at Cavite that was part of that Far East command, they shuffled them. Some of them came to Corregidor, but mostly they went to Bataan. As a matter-of-fact, the Air Force, it was bombed. A lot of our B-17s and P-40s were wrecked. So they flew the rest of the bombers out to the southern islands, and we only had a few P-40s, and, of course, they couldn't protect anything.

SH: Were the P-40s at Bataan or Corregidor?

AM: Bataan. Corregidor had a very small air field, which was very precarious when you landed and took off, as it is today, so they couldn't put anything over there.

SH: Did any ships come up to the docks and off-load material or anything for you?

AM: Well, what began the whole practice started up very shortly. A submarine would come in and they could find their way through the mine field [laid] by the Navy operation, turn off the mines, turn them on. The submarines would come in at night and off-load antiaircraft ammunition that we needed, and then they would take personnel, like we had the same thing as Pearl Harbor had, we had a PURPLE machine. The Japanese code had been broken, and so information was gathered at Navy intercept tunnel on Corregidor. [Editor's Note: The PURPLE Machine was a codename used by the Allies for a Japanese cipher machine used to decode Japanese diplomatic messages during World War II.] Well, they had to get them the hell off Corregidor because they didn't want the Japs to get their hands on them. It would have been very helpful to the Japanese. So, they got them off, and they got all other personnel off, and then [the] next invasion was when MacArthur left, like the 15th of March. The President of the Philippines, and, you know, certain officers, they went out on torpedo boats. … They went down to the southern islands of the Philippines, and, then, they flew to Australia.

SH: Had they come to Corregidor before they went to this other island?

AM: Yes.

SH: So they came from Manila to you.

AM: Corregidor was the only stronghold that we really had. Bataan was a ragtag long peninsula, and the people had been shuttled down there to make their stand. But they really didn't have the food. MacArthur didn't move the food dumps down, so there was no food to start with, and their weapons and ammunitions, and stuff, was pretty scarce.

EB: I was going to ask you what were you eating at this point? Were you well fed?

AM: The first three months we ate pretty good; we ate a lot of cracked wheat. I got used to that, of course. But we managed to pilfer warehouses and things like that. … After that, it began to get very difficult, and we didn't have much to eat. Like the marines that came down from Shanghai, they were on beach defense. They brought them over the last minute from Bataan. They were on beach defense around Corregidor, and they were living on nothing; one can of Vienna sausages for four men, and stuff like that.

EB: Did the Army and the Marines coordinate?

AM: Yes, we had no friction there what-so-ever. … Like the Army, we had D Battery, 60th Antiaircraft. It was out on the point where the Japanese eventually landed, and those guys were scraping [by] trying to find enough to eat, and so were some of the other groups, machine gun groups, and so forth.

EB: Did you know the Philippines was going badly? They were not eating. Did you think surrender was coming?

AM: Say again.

EB: Did you think that a surrender was coming, because things were going so badly?

AM: You know, the funny thing was, that never [was] in our mind. [Never] did it enter … that we would surrender. We thought we would fight to the end, like the Alamo, that's the way we felt, and that's the way we wanted it. … A surrender had nothing to do with the men. As the upper officers, they made those decisions, and they did it, not us.

SH: Can we talk a little bit more about after the 30th of December, kind of where you are and what are you aware of what is going on, on the rest of Corregidor?

AM: We had a communication set up, like [with] all the antiaircraft guns, and the batteries, and so forth, and unless the cables got fractured by bombs … we had pretty good communications, until toward the end; it just became chaos, toward the end.

SH: So, in that initial bombing on the 30th, did you lose any men? You talked about some of the cables being fractured.

AM: The first bombing, we lost our first man, a guy by the name of Arnold, who was dearly loved by all the guys. He … jumped into a machine gun pit, and the Japs were coming in low with dive bombers, and they were dropping antipersonnel bombs and one of these went in. … I was in my own pit, but I saw this gathering down below. I was wondering what in the world was going on, so I went down there and I saw this guy in an old van, and they had him covered up with canvas, but his shoes were gone, and so forth. … I later learned that the concussion of this bomb, this small twenty-five pound bomb, or something, just actually blasted; he didn't look like he had been hit by anything. You know, strangely. Just the concussion killed him, of course, and when we lost him, the first guy, it was really a startling affair, and we didn't take that very well. … From then on we lost [more]. We had [our] number one gun … hit by shell fire, and we had shell fire coming from the southern part of Manila Bay, and coming across and hitting, and they hit our number one gun, killed two, or three, or four guys.

SH: On the 30th you were being hit, not only by aircraft, but also by naval fire.

AM: Yes, they had guns enfilade [gunfire directed from a flanking position along the length of an enemy battle line] over across Manila Bay, and they were firing at us from there. I think it was lackadaisical-type firing, but, you know, you got to hit something when it's congested like Corregidor was.

SH: How long did that first initial attack last?

AM: It lasted a good part of the day. … They had captured already Manila, and Nichols Field, and Clark Field; they were already using those as their own air fields. All they had to do was drop bombs and fly back across the bay, and land and get some more bombs, some more gas, and come back again. So, they were coming in groups of nine and twenty-seven.

SH: How effective was your antiaircraft fire?

AM: Amazingly good, considering that everything was model 1918; all of our equipment. That's what nobody seems to realize, when I make talks on Corregidor. When I [was] over there with two groups, and so forth, they are absolutely blasted to realize these guns, the big guns, were put in in 1918, 1914, 1913. They were very old but they were very effective.

EB: There were no malfunctions in any of the weapons?

AM: No, we had very little, only when there was a hit. Of course, the Japanese, once they took Bataan, they could really hit us hard with 240-millimeter, about ten-inch shells. … There was a battery, just above us, that had twelve, twelve-inch mortars, and it was struck with these 240s. It blew completely out; there were guns flying out all over the place.

SH: … You said the 30th lasted most of the day, how soon was it before they came back again, or continued to shell?

AM: Tomorrow.

SH: The next day.

AM: Yes.

SH: Did it continue everyday afterwards?

AM: They did that for a while then.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: We were just talking about how the day opened, and you said each day they would come back and it would start again. Did it start early in the morning or did it vary? Could you clock them?

AM: It usually happened at about ten or eleven o'clock, and they'd come in from the east with the sun behind them so that … [we] would hopefully … be blinded … with our antiaircraft, which really wasn't the case, but then there would be pauses. Then one time there was a rather large pause, because they pulled a lot of troops out of the area and took them down to Mindanao, so it was ragtag; they just operated with the equipment they had. The Japanese had good airplanes for the purpose, but they had a couple that we could reach, so we did hit quite a few aircraft. I think we actually knocked down like two hundred and eighty through the period of five months. It was hectic and it was difficult. My position, fortunately, was located where the cliff dropped off on the south side of the island, and it was very difficult for them to hit. They did hit us, they dropped bombs and shells, of course, but some of the batteries were just absolutely decimated. … Like C-battery was on the Bataan side of the island, and they were

very vulnerable; there was nothing you could do. You can do so much, and that's all. So, the big guns were hit very hard.

SH: You had talked about the mind set that you would stay there and just keep fighting, so there never was any discussion about having you all taken off the island and moved somewhere else?

AM: No, no.

EB: What did you think of the Japanese at this point, this tiny little island nation, "Are they really attacking America?"

AM: Well, … the common word that went around us was, "We'll be out of here in six months."

EB: So, it was still this idea that "we were going to beat them"?

AM: Yes.

EB: Okay.

AM: Yes, but then people begin to doubt. … The thoughts that Spence and I had at the beginning of the battle, as it would transpire, was a lot different than other people thought. They thought that all American, the might of the United States and all that, which didn't exist, that would drive the Japanese back to their homeland. Of course, it was pretty obvious that they were beating us to death and nobody was going to beat anybody.

EB: Did you think at this point that America was going to send reinforcements, at any minute you would be seeing their planes shooting down the Japanese planes?

AM: The word that continually came over San Francisco radio was that, "Help is on the way." That was the common flag at that time. "Help is on the way." Spence and I were saying things, "Help is not on the way." "There ain't no help."

EB: So, you really thought you were on your own.

AM: Yes, we thought so early and we were planning what we were going to do when the termination came down, could we get off the island, etc, etc, you know. Of course, it was very precarious and difficult to try to get off the island. Three guys out of my battery tried it and they got shot all to pieces by the Marines, you know, just trying to get away in a small boat. No, we didn't have any hope. We really didn't. There wasn't anything to base any hope on.

SH: The three men who were killed trying to get off the island, was it by US Marines?

AM: US Marines on Fort Hughes, which was just a couple miles from Corregidor, they were on beach defense, and these three guys, one guy was a supply sergeant, the other guy was a cook, and the other guy was a dummy, really, really a dummy without ability to really think for himself. … This was all planned by this supply sergeant. They saw this boat down, I guess it

was at anchor, small, small sailboat, and they went down and they got in it at night, and, I guess, they stayed in rotation of one day, and then the next night they started to cross.

SH: They were heading towards Bataan?

AM: No, they were headed away from Bataan, south.

SH: Oh, okay.

AM: They were out in the water and this supply sergeant got to swearing and hollering and saying things very loudly that the Marines on Fort Hughes, who was in range, of course, across the water, they heard him, and, I guess, they hailed him, and since they didn't get any response, except more swearing, why, they cut loose with .50 caliber machine guns, and they cut the boat to pieces. … Two of the guys went down, the supply sergeant and the one guy named Odengay went down. The other guy, Luthe, he made it down farther in the scraps of what was left of this boat, and then he got picked up down around the corner of southern Luzon. There's really no chance to get away.

SH: Was this much later in the month, this was not in the beginning?

AM: No, this is not in the beginning. This was when things were getting twitchy and some of these people, with those kind of thoughts, thought that they would get away from the island and escape the Japanese, which was almost impossible, you know.

EB: How do you think you kept your sanity in five months of fighting?

AM: Well, my friend and I, of course, [we] were split up, he was in a search light outfit and they were out toward the airfield, and I was up there. We met once in the tunnel and had a chat, as a matter-of-fact. He came up, he got a chance to come up, … then the rest of the guys, some of them were kind of stupid. They really didn't understand world events. They didn't understand what was really happening. All they saw was right in front of their eyes; they couldn't really make any conclusions to speak of. So, I had an assistant supply sergeant that was in my machine gun pit with me and another fellow by the name of Larson, and we, between us, pretty much kept our marbles together and we would slip out to the warehouse down around the bend and steal C-rations and things of that nature. … We kept up the camaraderie, you know, between us. All of us were intelligent and we understood what was happening. The best idea was to try to keep out of the way of being hit by a bomb, which were falling quite freely.

SH: Did it intensify then, when it did happen, you said there would be a break and then …

AM: Then they would come back with more bombing raids and then, finally, we got up to April 9th, which Bataan surrendered. General King surrendered.

EB: You heard about that. You heard when they surrendered?

AM: Yes, and people were trying to get over to Corregidor, escaping from Bataan, and so forth. Some did, and they got [across], I think, most of the nurses [got] over across, and a lot of Navy people were over there. They brought them over there. Navy had a tunnel where they stored torpedoes and things, for submarines, for whatever. … It just seems to me that the whole world fell apart when Bataan fell.

SH: Before Bataan falls, were you aware that MacArthur was on Corregidor? When were you aware that he was there?

AM: Oh, I knew he was there all the time. He moved over to Malinta Tunnel, and he had a lateral down in the tunnel, perfectly safe, you know.

EB: What did you think about him being removed and sent to Australia?

AM: We was glad to see him go. You know, MacArthur was an over bearing man. He was not the kind of person that you wanted for a general, you know. He thought he was so mighty that the Japanese wouldn't strike the Philippines, you know, it went that far. … He looked down his nose at soldiers, like myself, as gnats. So, we didn't have any respect for him at all.

SH: Had you ever been where he was?

AM: Yes, I was sent down … by my captain, Captain Starr, down to Malinta Tunnel to get the cigarette ration, because he knew I didn't smoke, and he could kind of trust me to get them and get them back … I was down there, and that was one of the times when I met my friend, Spence, down there. … We were right near the east entrance to the tunnel while there was a bombing raid going on, and we were talking, and we looked around for some reason. We heard people talking by us and MacArthur was standing just, maybe, ten or twelve feet away, and the President of the Philippines, Quezon, he was there. … MacArthur's little boy, he was just a little kid … and he ran, and he ran out the tunnel, and Spence, automatically, just ran out and got him, even though there weren't any bombs falling at the time, and when he brought [him] back and gave [him] to this woman that took care of MacArthur's son, MacArthur didn't even say thanks, or anything like that. What little bit of respect that I had for him was gone then. You know, he [was] just totally far away from all the rest of us.

EB: You didn't have that connection where you wanted to do this for him.

AM: No.

EB: So what did you feel you were fighting for, your buddies, your comrades?

AM: Yeah, that's what it all boiled down to; we were very close together in the batteries. We had close friends, you know. As close as Spence and I could have bee, we were kind of [unique] … But as far as the officers, I had an excellent officer, Captain Warren Starr, he was a super guy.

SH: Where was he from?

AM: He was from Washington, up, Washington State. As a matter-of-fact, my wife and I went up to visit him after we came back, when I found out through a historian friend of mine that he was living in Washington. This one town, I forget what [it was called], but we spent a wonderful day with him and his wife, you know. We had pizza, and I had lots of questions, and he had lots of answers.

EB: That's wonderful.

AM: He let me have his writings, all of his writings, and I did a lot of video-taping when I took twelve trips back to the Philippines …

SH: Oh, really.

AM: I was very knowledgeable [about] all the islands, and between my daughter and I, she let me use her video camera, so I did a lot of video. So, I had made up some tapes, for no reason, other than to show it at the conventions, and such as that. … I gave him a tape, and his children, none of them had ever seen where he was, and he was so pleased, and I was so shocked when he passed away. He seemed so healthy and so real. I was going to go up and go salmon fishing with him, and it all went down the tubes when he passed away.

EB: When did he pass away?

AM: Great guy. I don't know what the era was, what time it was, but it was quite a long time [ago], you know.

SH: Of your people in your battery, you said there was about thirty.

AM: About a hundred and twenty.

SH: A hundred and twenty, okay. How many were still there when you were taken captive?

AM: I think we lost about, maybe, seven or eight people, that's all.

SH: What about Wainwright, did you ever see or meet him during this time?

AM: Oh, I liked him. Yeah, during this time MacArthur never at any time came to our battery, you know, like officers do, but Wainwright did. … I saw Wainwright stand up on top of the height grinder and director pit, and stand up there with his glasses while the Japs were bombing us. You know, he had nerves of steel, and he was such a great guy. He would talk to you, like I talk to you, you know. He was just a super guy. His main downfall was drinking; he was a heavy drinker. But, I think, he done his job. … I think MacArthur, matter-of-fact, I know he did, he essentially warned him [Wainwright]. After MacArthur got out of there and went to Australia, [he warned Wainwright] not to surrender and not to this, not to do that, and, you know, totally ridiculous. … He had no choice of whether we surrendered or not. We were being over powered by a huge well-equipped army, so, I just have no use for MacArthur.

SH: You talked about the fact that you didn't smoke, how prevalent was drinking on Corregidor amongst the men?

AM: Much, much, some people. Like I didn't make enough money. I only made, finally, like twenty-one dollars a month for the first four months, and then, I think, I made thirty dollars a month after that, and I didn't drink anyway. You know, guys used to take me with them, to get them back to the [base], you know, Frisco and other places in the Philippines. But I didn't have the money to go to Manila and carouse around, so I didn't try. It was very cheap, but a lot of these guys would get what you call a pack of gin, something bigger then this, and go up to the room and stay there until it was time to get on the boat and go back. So they were …

EB: Were you sending your money back to your parents?

AM: I made an allotment of ten dollars a month back, because they needed the help, and all I needed it for was shaving cream, and so forth. … Then once a month I'd go down and get my hamburger, steak, and eggs at the bottom. That was my monthly payment back to myself, but other than that, I didn't.

SH: So there was a place on Corregidor for the enlisted men to go.

AM: Yes, we had a kind of a drinking thing at the YMCA building, that I'll show you if you want to look at it. … Then they had another bar down at Bottom Side. I'd go down there because they had a restaurant also, and that is where I would get my hamburger, steak, and eggs, which I can still taste. [laughter]

EB: That's what my grandma said about steak, she can't chew it now but she can still remember the way it tasted.

AM: Oh, yes. [laughter] I think I've seen almost all there is to see, when you stop to think about it, through the Depression and the difficulties we had, and going into the service and coming back, and so forth.

SH: I was just going to say, prior to the Japanese attack on the Philippines and Pearl Harbor, had you been a good letter writer?

AM: Yes.

SH: Were you getting letters also from home?

AM: Yes, yes. I wrote continually to my parents, and my aunt and uncle, and a couple … other ones. … My mother still had the letters, you know. Then I would keep all these things together. But I thought it was delightful, myself, I didn't see anything about it that I didn't like about that island. I loved the island, and I loved the activities that we had; we had all kinds of sports.

EB: Did you play baseball?

AM: Yeah, we played baseball. They played, all the batteries had basketball teams.

EB: But you didn't like basketball. You were too short.

AM: No, I never have liked basketball. [laughter]

EB: Did you actually play a position in baseball when the battery teams would play each other?

AM: Yes … we had some teams and we played at the parade grounds. We had parade grounds at Top Side and one at Middle Side, and I loved to play that. I had played that in junior high.

EB: Were you a pitcher or a catcher?

AM: I was second baseman. I didn't have much arm, but I could run, and I could throw the ball to the third baseman or the first baseman, but trying to throw from third to first was very difficult for me, so I played second base.

EB: How tall were you?

AM: Five seven and a half.

EB: Five seven and a half. How much did you weigh before the actual battle started?

AM: One hundred and thirty-five pounds.

EB: One hundred and thirty-five pounds.

AM: Yep.

EB: By the time, after five months of fighting, and less food, how much did you weigh before the surrender?

AM: Well, I am down to probably about, I don't know, about one hundred and twenty-five pounds, some thing like that.

EB: That was before you were a prisoner.

AM: Yes.

SH: Did you ever have to take advantage of the medical facilities that were there, prior to the attack?

AM: This may seem ridiculous to you, but I never saw the hospital on Corregidor. It was quite a magnificent building, you know. I'll show you if you want to see, but I'd never seen it before, until I went back.

EB: Oh, so, no malaria, no dysentery?

AM: I never, never, got malaria, very strange; everybody got malaria but me. [laughter]

EB: So your buddy, was he ever sick?

AM: He didn't have malaria either. We didn't have any sicknesses, nothing but cuts and bruises.

EB: I'm going to go to Columbus, Ohio; right, that's where you were living before?

AM: Yeah, yeah.

EB: There must be something in the water.

AM: I don't know, but it was really strange that I didn't get malaria.

EB: So, five months of fighting, I can't imagine that, for one, twenty-four hours a day, when did you sleep?

AM: Well, you slept when you could, you know. I used to sleep on the concrete, as in the facing in front of the six-inch guns, I would sleep up there. Somebody would hear on the intercept that there was planes and motors in the West, they used the same motors in the east, … you would get up and get alert.

EB: So there was intelligence at the time?

AM: Yes.

EB: Still operating.

AM: Yes, we didn't really get ripped apart until right at the end, after Bataan fell.

SH: As you were sitting up there, what do you know of what's going on at Bataan?

EB: Before they surrendered?

AM: All we were getting, we were getting bits of information. … Early in the war they took E battery and another battery, Globe, maybe, they took them over to Bataan to try to protect things over there. There was an antiaircraft outfit over there. They were National Guard from New Mexico that arrived there just before the war, just before, and they moved them over there. They decided to move two of our batteries over, and our batteries were gone. But my captain went over with the commanding officer of the 60th. … They found that they couldn't get our guns back where they wanted them, so, they threw that down and we stayed on Corregidor, thank heavens.

EB: When did you actually find out, and where were you when you found out Bataan surrendered?

AM: Well, we were getting bits and pieces of information continually, especially from the two 60th batteries that were over there. They were trying to get their equipment ready to get it across the channel, which was like two and a half miles, and very difficult. It was just like a venturi tube the way the tide came in from the ocean. But, I forget what you asked me in the first place.

EB: Did you get some sort of indication, did they say, "Bataan has surrendered, you are all that is left"?

AM: Well, we heard that General King had surrendered by radio.

EB: By radio.

AM: But, it was all coming apart. You know, MacArthur had given (Himmel?) orders, just like our other general, Wainwright, not to surrender, but King took it upon himself. He said his men had no food; they had run out of ammunition, and it was impossible for them to fight a modern army, you know, so he took it upon himself to go to General [Masaharu] Homma, the Japanese, and surrender officially.

SH: When you heard that King had surrendered, when that information trickled up to you at your battery, what did you think?

AM: Oh, we thought real strong, we knew without Bataan backing us up that the Japanese are going to move artillery in post haste, which they did, starting the next day. … Once they moved 240s in and, you know, large guns, besides 105s and 155s, they just started unloading on us, and you couldn't hardly get out of your hole to get water, or anything else, because they were just continually bombarding us. … I have pictures that was taken by the Japanese from Bataan, and the whole island of Corregidor was covered with smoke; you couldn't even see the island. There was just continual barrages, and we knew we couldn't last for long, and we did last a month, that's all. … Then Wainwright felt that the Japanese would land, and he was afraid they would get in the tunnel, and into the hospital and the nurses and everything, so he decided he had no options but to surrender and try and save blood, which was logical. We didn't think much of it. But it was logical. We would have rather fought them off, because we really had the resources to do it. But all our communications on the east part of the rock was blasted by bombs and shells.

SH: Were you ever told that there was help coming, or did you always know that you were the only last hold out?

AM: We were always told that help was coming, but we knew better than to think [that].

SH: You knew that?

AM: It was just impossible, with no Navy, and with the Japanese Navy as it was.

SH: So, you never really did have hope that it was coming?

AM: No.

EB: What did you think of the Japanese? Had you heard any stories about the Japanese going through China, and the rapes, and the killings? At this point, were you fearful of the Japanese and what they would do?

AM: We were pretty well assured that they were going to be cruel and blood thirsty, as they were when they come in and took over. We had quite a bit of intelligence from China.

EB: From China.

SH: What were you told to do, when the word was passed that Wainwright was going to surrender? What were your instructions, what were you to do?

AM: The word came to each battery commander to have the men destroy all the guns and destroy all paper, any kind of communications; anything they could learn from, get rid of all that because, as of the next day at noon, the surrender would take place. Of course, unfortunately, the Japanese didn't stop shooting when the surrender took place. They kept firing, so, we received a word, at our battery, to get across the parade ground, somehow, and get to Middle Side tunnel. Well, we never heard of Middle Side tunnel before, it was back there, but we didn't know about it. So, our noncoms led small parties of us across, between the shelling, and we got to Middle Side tunnel and got inside. That's the first time I ever saw it.

SH: Were you able to disarm your gun or dismantle it?

AM: Yes. Yes, I pounded my machine gun; it was water cooled, and I took an axe and busted it. I chopped big slits in the water cool and I took out the firing mechanism, threw them over the hill, that was all I could do, or bury them, and that's what everybody else tried to do. They tried to disable the three-inch guns, which were partially destroyed anyway from these shells and everything.

EB: What did you think was going to happen? Did you think the Japanese were going to come, and you were going to surrender, and you would be prisoners on Corregidor, and you would still be living there?

AM: Well, we didn't really have any assumptions about what they would do. It was just, you know, whatever happens, that's what happens. We had no comprehension of what they'd do.

SH: When they took you to the cave, or the tunnel, what happened then? Describe it, please.

AM: We went inside. There was other batteries brought there, too. I think, C battery was also brought there. … We were just lined up. They had some wood-facing around on both sides of the tunnel, and I just sat down where they told me to. … I sat there with my back to this wood for the night, trying to get a little sleep until the next morning. An officer came in, and, he said,

"The Japs are outside, and they want us out of here." So, we filed on outside, and they lined us up and took us to the Middle Side parade ground, which is down the way a little bit, and they made us spread all of our belongings out, and they took what they wanted, which was about everything.

SH: What did you have that you had to lay out?

AM: I had stuff. In the first place, I had a log in a little school composition notebook that I was keeping a log of all that was happening, and all the dates and everything. … I didn't want them to get that, so, I slid that down inside my belt, inside my shirt in back, and hoped like hell they didn't pat me down, and they didn't. They didn't find that. They took my watch. … Some of the guys next to me, they took their billfolds and threw their pictures all over and stomped them in the ground, and stuff like that. You know, just absolute cruelty, I guess, is the best term.

SH: How many Japanese were there when you came out of the tunnel?

AM: Probably, oh, there was probably forty, thirty or forty of them out there, and they were lining us up in columns of fours. … Once they would get a group, they would march them down to the parade ground, which is not very far. I could show you that.

SH: Did they look like you thought they would look?

AM: Really, they didn't. These were what they called "shock troops" and they were old and grizzlied monkeys. You know, they had hair dangling, loose hair down … and they … didn't act to me like they were even intelligent. They were just cannon fodder. That's what we used to call them. That's what they used to invade with; they were cruel, very cruel. … So, you might get your head hammered with the butt of a rifle for nothing, just for standing there.

EB: Did anyone speak Japanese? Was anyone translating for you?

AM: We didn't have anyone at that early point. Later on, we had some guys, like Boyce. Boyce spoke Japanese fluently, and there were a few other guys, but we didn't have anybody there in the beginning.

EB: How would the Japanese tell you, they would just round you up by pointing?

AM: Arm motions, and, hitting you with a rifle butt, stuff like that.

EB: You learn pretty fast that way.

AM: Yes, quick.

SH: Were you one of the first ones to be sent forward then, or were you at the back of the line?

AM: I was probably the forward third, stuff like that, and they marched us down to Middle Side parade ground, and they just spread all of our stuff out, and they went around kicking things.

EB: How many were there of you at that point, on Corregidor that surrendered?

AM: Well, my estimate was about twelve thousand.

EB: Twelve thousand.

AM: That included a lot of people that got over from Bataan at the last moment.

EB: Was this just chaotic at this point? Was there still American, US, officers in charge? Or did all military hierarchy sort of break down?

AM: No, they killed several American officers who were trying to protect our men. There, in the first part of it, it was pretty brutal. Then they marched us down to Bottom Side and through the tunnel, and then there were dead bodies laying around on the other side, of Marines and Army, and they were put there on purpose because none of them had reached that point that close.

SH: Really?

AM: Until the surrender. We were marched, by them, down to 92nd Garage, and that's where, finally, my buddy hollered at me. He was already down there since he was out there in the first place. … About four guys had gathered together with something to shave you. You needed something because it was so bloody hot on this concrete, and that's how I got together with Spence. … From then on, we had all kinds of adventures, until we left the island.

SH: When they marched you out of the middle tunnel, and they send you down, how long does that take before you are out there in the open again?

AM: Well, they march us down; it took us probably about thirty minutes, or so, to get down to Bottom Side, and then they marched us through the tunnel, which is mass chaos in there, and out the other side, and then down the road about, you know, three hundred yards, and, then, down the hill to 92nd Garage.

SH: Are you men talking to each other as you are going?

AM: Yes, unless there were threats, or something like that. Sometimes the Japs would threaten us for talking. So, if you're talking they would hit you in the head, and so, you kind of played it by ear.

EB: What did you think of the Geneva Convention at this point? Because I heard that some people thought that maybe they were going to follow it. Did you not believe they were treating you this way?

AM: We couldn't conceive that they would treat prisoners of war in such a fashion. You know, immediately, they just started outright, from the beginning.

EB: Did you notice that they were picking on certain people more then others? I heard something about the taller guys, that they liked to pick on them because it was more of a power trip to these small [Japanese] men, and they could beat up these six foot guys. Did you find that they did do that?

AM: They did do that. … I think they felt beneath us. Of course, we were bigger than they were, and, of course, some of the big guys were really bigger.

EB: Right.

AM: … The first thing you'd learn, possibly, is keep your mouth shut.

EB: Keep your mouth shut.

AM: Don't offer them nothing, and if someone wants you to do something, by rote of motions and so forth, you did it. Otherwise, you were going to get your head bashed in.

EB: Were there guys that were defiant, that did get beat more, that couldn't handle being told what to do.

AM: There were, there were.

EB: So was there US racism? So they couldn't handle following these guys, these "Japs, these monkeys"?

AM: Definitely.

EB: They just couldn't handle following them?

AM: No, some of them couldn't handle it. Some of them couldn't keep their mouth shut, and they paid the price. You know, a lot of them got bayoneted, and a lot of them got hit with the rifle butts and had their teeth knocked out. What Spence and I did through this period of time, right after the surrender and everything, after we got together, we stayed away from them. We didn't offer anything.

EB: Did you try to stay in the middle of the group? Did you notice they were sort of butting people on the ends?

AM: Yes, that was normal. You didn't see the Japs in the middle very much.

EB: Right. So you and Spence, did you depend on each other to watch each other's back?

AM: Definitely.

EB: Okay.

AM: … Then we realized that we didn't have anything to eat. So he talked me into going up the hill nearby, because there weren't any fences up yet and the Japs weren't paying any attention, so, we went up to D battery, which was just up on the hill. We went up scrounging for food, and we did find some cans of stuff.

EB: Did you eat them there secretly and come back?

AM: No, we brought them back on a stretcher with some canvas stretched over it. … We got stopped by a squad of Japanese, and, I told Spence, I said, "You know, put the thing down and salute." They like saluting. So we saluted and bowed our head and stuff like that and they went on and left us be. We got down the hill, how, I'll never know, without getting interrupted. … We got down to our little lean-to and we discovered that we had three number-ten cans, and they turned out to be all tomatoes, stewed tomatoes, and I hate tomatoes.

EB: Did you eat it, though?

AM: No. I couldn't eat it.

EB: Did you regret later on that you hadn't eaten it?

AM: No, to this day I can't eat tomatoes. So, I traded, a Navy guy in the next little cabal over there, I traded him a cup of tomatoes for biscuits. He had some biscuits, they weren't very good, but they were something I could eat, anyway. Then, later, when we got on this, they asked for a thousand men to a work detail, so, Spence talked me into it. I said, "I think it's crazy, it might be a burial detail, or something." He said, "No, no let's go." So, we went, and they took us in the tunnel, and that was where a lot of our storage were, and we had, we did cases, and each guy carried a case down out of the tunnel and down the road and down to the dock and put it on for the Japanese. Well, we suddenly realized that there was quite a distance between Jap guards, and so forth, and when we had a point we would rip open the box and take out a can, and we had a little can openers like that, and we'd lie. The first thing I did was eat two and a half cans of peaches in probably twelve point seven seconds. [laughter]

EB: Chugging peaches.

AM: I tried. It tasted so good, you know, because I was so hungry. … By that way we were able to fill our stomachs, and if you didn't get caught you were in fat city. So, I was on a couple of those details and got some food and, then, we managed to make it. But we only had one little water source for all these twelve thousand people. So, we found it, and there was an endless line twenty-four hours a day going through that.

EB: Did you guys save each other's spots? You would get in line and then ...

AM: Yes, we took turns. We had five guys, so we took turns doing this.

EB: Did you really feel that having Spence was one of the reasons you survived?

AM: I think so. I think we had the mental capacity to take each event as it occurred and use it to the best of our ability. You know, not let them get us down.

EB: Do you feel it kept your sanity and kept your morale up, between the two of you?

AM: That's right.

EB: You were going to survive for each other, because you needed each other.

AM: Definitely, definitely. … We went on a volunteer run, out of Cabanatuan, out to Nichols Field prison camp, which we didn't know what it was. There we, you know, we live and learn and thought together and managed, but we kept up our morale at all times.

EB: Right. What would you guys talk about to keep up morale? What would you do, when you got home?

AM: Food.

EB: Food, just food.

AM: Food.

EB: Did you make up the fantasy ice cream sundae you would have?

AM: We had guys who'd sit, and go through the motions, and bake a cake. Every kind of imaginative thing like that, we did.

EB: You thought, "I'm going to live because I'm going to have that cake and it's going to be delicious."

AM: Yes. Well, I always had firmly ensconced in my mind that I was going to make it through. It was all possible, and there were times I had some doubts during the war. I had some close calls, and when we got on that prison ship, I had doubts that we would ever make it, or not, and we were very fortunate.

EB: Were you very religious at all?

AM: I was kind of … a protestant at that time.

EB: Did you pray?

AM: Oh, yes. You do pray.

EB: I've heard the saying, "There are no atheists in foxholes."

AM: That's essentially true.

EB: Would you talk to anyone else in your head? Would you talk to your mom? Would you say, "Mom, I'll be home"?

AM: Not much of that. They didn't even know I was alive for a year and a half.

EB: Really. When you were first surrendered and you were taken prisoner, you weren't allowed to send anything home saying you were a prisoner?

AM: No. They finally came through with little cards that were preprinted and you could say, "I am good, fair," etc., and, then at the bottom, I would tell them to take care of Skippy, that was my dog, and I would mention an aunt so that they would know that I wrote that.

EB: Okay.

AM: That's the only [space], because most of it was preprinted.

EB: It was mostly just to let them know that you were alive and that was it.

AM: That's right. It was difficult at first ...

EB: Obviously, after the war you talked to your parents, but do you know what they were thinking at the time? Did they tell you?

AM: Yes, they really thought I was dead.

EB: They did.

AM: … Sadly, my mother did away with a lot of my things I certainly would have liked to have had, but, I couldn't blame them for that.

EB: So they had grieved for you already.

AM: Yes.

EB: Okay. What about your town, did they have postings of where the guys were? Did they have you posted as deceased, or missing in action?

AM: Yes, I have some newspaper articles still, from back then, of my picture in the paper, and my buddies, and it was telling them that I was taken prisoner in the Philippines.

EB: POW of the Japs.

AM: Yeah.

EB: My grandfather [Dominick Giantonio] had a similar article I saw.

AM: Yes.

EB: How long were you actually on Corregidor after the surrender, before they moved you?

AM: About twenty days.

EB: Twenty days.

AM: Yes.

EB: They were just really organizing you for those twenty days, getting supplies.

AM: From what I understand, and researched, there were far more of us than they could handle, like in Bataan. That's what happened in [the] Bataan Death March. It turned into a terrible thing, and a lot of people died fruitlessly because of this. The Japanese weren't prepared, and I don't think they were prepared for that many on Corregidor, either. So, consequently, they just kind of handed us the back of their hand, and it wasn't a very pleasant experience.

EB: Twenty days you were there and then did you get word? Was it the officers who told you you were going to be moved?

AM: No, the word came through, and I don't know how it got started. But the word came through that they were going to put us on boats and out in the channel, and we kind of got to the idea that we were going to Manila.

EB: Okay.

AM: … So, we stayed there all night on the boats. There were three of these boats, and I don't think all of the guys got on there. I think, they probably had to make more trips. They took us in and dumped us in the water, and, of course, the water was over our heads.

EB: Really. They actually just stopped and said, "Get off here"?

AM: They just pushed you out the front of the boat and some guys had too much stuff, gear, that they were trying to carry, and they didn't come up, and other guys couldn't swim, they got entangled in their gear, and so forth. But, I went in and my feet hit. I was about chin high, and I waded in, I was fine.

SH: What kind of gear did they have you carrying?

AM: Well, these guys, you know, people are kind of like they are today, in a way. They were trying to carry as much stuff that the Japs didn't take away from us. They had backpacks and all kinds of junk. I really don't know what they had in them. But I wondered why these guys were jeopardizing themselves, and going through these different events, like this jumping off the front

of the boat, why? You didn't know where the bottom was, or anything like that, and you're going to risk your neck for a bunch of trivial things, but that's what they did. Some carried a lot of stuff, and some didn't.

EB: What about Spence? Could Spence swim?

AM: Oh, yes, we were both very good swimmers.

EB: Was he with you at this point on the boat?

AM: Yes, we were together on the boat, and we slept standing up, literally, all night and when the boat fired up the next morning, it went into Manila, which is about thirty miles.

EB: When you got to Manila, then what?

AM: Then they dumped us out of the boats. We waded up the shore and they lined us up. … They [would] finally get quite a few amassed and, then, they would start marching us. .. They marched us down Dewey Boulevard, past all the Filipinos, you know, they wanted to show they were the great, conquering heroes, and so forth.

EB: Was this what was called the "Victory March"?

AM: Well, it might have been called that, I haven't heard it referred to as that. But they marched us all the way through to Bilibid Prison. Some of the officers, one of the officers fell over … and some of the guys carried him, and some of the guys carried their buddies, and so forth. But, the Filipinos were trying to feed us and they would beat them up when they [did].

SH: From the time you got off, or maybe from the time you were on the ship, were there other, was there a mixture of Army and Navy personnel with you?

AM: We were all thrown together.

SH: Were there also other foreign nationals with you?

AM: No.

SH: There were no Australians, or coastal watchers?

AM: We had no other foreigners, other than the Filipinos.

SH: The Filipinos were not separated from you, they were with you?

AM: They were separated at 92nd Garage, and when we went on the boats, I can't recall if they were on one boat, or whether they were spread out.

EB: Did you notice that the Japanese guards were treating the Filipinos much worse than the Americans?

AM: Yes, we did.

EB: You did notice that.

AM: Yes, we did. Yes, they were very cruel to the Filipino, especially on the Death March on Bataan. They killed far, far, far, more of them than they did the Americans.

EB: Obviously, you couldn't help them. You felt helpless.

AM: Couldn't help them, no. Just couldn't.

SH: In this march from the shoreline to the prison, what did you see, what do you remember?

AM: Well, it was, I was taking it all in I, you know, wanted to see areas that I hadn't seen before when …

[TAPE PAUSED]

EB: This continues an interview with Al McGrew, on April 14th. Continue, you were talking about what you were looking at on the march.

AM: Yes, I was looking at people, and looking at buildings, and things that I hadn't seen before. I just tried to take advantage of the situation and all you could do was walk along in this long column of people.

EB: You didn't know at this point where you were actually going.

AM: No, I had no idea, never heard of Bilibid Prison, whatsoever. Finally, I decided I might as well take advantage of it and watch the goings on. I saw lots of Filipinos throwing food and cigarettes. They'd take the cigarettes and kind of wrap string around them with matches stuck in them. Of course, the Japs would bash them every chance that they got, you know.

EB: Did you see one of them really hurt a Filipino, or kill one?

AM: Yes, definitely. Yes, all the way through.

EB: There were still women and children trying to throw food.

AM: Yes, still trying to help us.

EB: How did that make you feel?

AM: Well, it gave us a lot of real, a little bit of jump in our emotions, and so forth.

EB: Right. You had been fighting for America, but also for the Philippines, for the Filipino people, and they weren't just abandoning you as soon as you lost. They still cared.

AM: That's right, that's right. They tried to help us all the way through, and they suffered horribly for it.

EB: What was it like when you got to Bilibid Prison? Was there any organization at this point? Did US officers try to organize?

AM: Really, the American officers weren't doing much of anything. Once we went in this foreboding structure, you know, it was this old, gray prison for Bilibid prisoners. They had cleaned them out and put us in there, and I didn't like the sight of this place, at all. We were only there, I was only there, maybe, about four days, three or four days.

EB: That was enough.

AM: That was enough, and then they took us out and walked us down a ways to a little railroad yard, and they had these small boxcars. You know, they're about as long as this is here.

EB: Would you say there is a thousand of you at this point, or more than that?

AM: There were more coming, landing from these three boats at all times. So, they … left one group to work on the Rock, I can remember, I learned this later, I didn't know it then.

EB: Right.

AM: But, out of the twelve thousand, there were probably ten thousand anyway, had come across in this manner, so, they just kept coming on shore.

EB: Bilibid was just one point. Did all of you go from there, or they were just trickling out thousands at a time?

AM: No, they were taking us all to Bilibid, and we went in there and there was no [room]. Spence and I was looking for a place. We got in a corner outside of one of the barracks. It was shaped like a big wheel.

EB: Oh, yes, I've seen a picture.

AM: Yes. It was, you know, a ratty place to say the least. So, we just found a corner and we sat there, contemplating, you know, what's going to happen next.

EB: You actually talked about it?

AM: I had no idea what was going to happen next and we stayed there that night and a couple more days; I don't know what it was, three or four days. Then they started taking groups of us out and putting us on these boxcars.

EB: That again was like the ship, you were standing up?

AM: Standing up. … If anybody died or something like that, or if people were sick. They had all kinds of diseases, dysentery, and everything, and they just squashed us in there. … Spence and I got on this one boxcar, kind of first, and he saw a place back in the far corner, the front corner, that he saw air, light.

EB: Like a window?

AM: No, there was no windows whatsoever. They had everything boarded up. But this one place the board had come off and we could kind of get our face pushed to it so we could breathe. It was incredibly hot on this boxcar, and they had us, jammed us in there just like sardines.

EB: Right.

AM: So … if you died, you would still be standing up; there was no place to fall down. Finally, this train started north, and that's where we ended up in a little town, Cabanatuan City. Then we marched. We stayed all night in a schoolyard.

EB: What did you think of Cabanatuan City?

AM: It was just, well, it was pretty crude, and we were in the outskirts, anyway. … They gave us a rice ball to eat. We hadn't had anything to eat. So, we had a place to get water there, which is one thing you were always crazed for, water. There wasn't very much.

EB: Were there guys at this point that you could tell were just losing the will to survive, or going a little crazy?

AM: Yes. One of the guys that worked on a height finder [Editor's Note: A height finder is a stereoscopic optical device used to determine the altitude of an aircraft**]** in my battery, he was a pretty hefty guy and he said, "I'm not going to eat rice. There is no way that they are going to make me eat rice." … He died, almost, oh hell, it must have been within the first week. He wouldn't eat rice. We ate as much as we could. Spence and I agreed if that's what we get, why, we can't live on it, we know, but we'll live as long as we can, so, we ate all we could get.

EB: I've heard that term "rice ball" before, is that actually just rice packed into a ball?

AM: Yes, yes, just packed.

EB: They wouldn't give you a plate or anything. They would just put the ball in your hand and you would eat?

AM: Yes. In those periods of time, not like in the work details and stuff, they had big cans and … we had eight rooms to start with, and maybe twenty guys, and there would be a guy in charge of each room, and he'd go to the galley, and he'd get the square can with rice, and then he'd mete it out. … It was up to him to make it as even as he could and still have some left when he got done.

EB: Right. So, you were in Cabanatuan City, or on the outskirts, for just one night?

AM: At Cabanatuan we stayed one night. The next morning they rousted us all out of there and we started marching down this dusty road, and it was quite a few kilometers, and we saw these, off to the right, they were like camps, and many had fences around them, and stuff like that. … We learned later that they were training camps for Filipino Scouts. So, anyway, we went into this last one. We passed two, and the third one was where we went, that was Cabanatuan Camp Three.

EB: Camp Three.

AM: Camp Three.

EB: At this point, are you thinking, "Is this ever going to end? Are we ever going be somewhere? Are we just going to be marched around this island forever?"

AM: You are just kind of almost mindless. You just take what comes, because there is nothing you can do about it.

EB: Day by day.

AM: Day by day, year by year.

EB: You and Spence are still together at this point, and you're in Cabanatuan, and what were the conditions like there in the camp?

AM: Well, the camp is pretty crude. The barracks, the so-called barracks, were like wooden structures, and so forth, with thatched roofs. You just found a place and put your bed, if you had anything for a bed.

EB: You mean, like a straw mat or something?

AM: Yes, that's right. That was at best.

EB: At this point, you weren't working or anything, your first night in Cabanatuan, and then after that, when you woke up the next morning, what did they tell you at this point?

AM: Nothing.

EB: Nothing.

AM: Nothing. We all sat around outside the barracks. One guy worked in a chocolate factory in San Francisco, and he talked about making chocolates, and, then, we were setting there talking about food, and that's all you thought about.

EB: No women? No Movies? Just food.

AM: No, no. The only time I heard guys talk about women is when we would be marching along the street to work, and you would see girls walking along, because Filipinos always lined up to watch us go by, and they would pick out a girl, or something like that, and talk, maybe mention what they thought of her. But we didn't, Spence and I, didn't think about girls because our main thing was stay alive.

EB: What were you wearing at this point? I mean, your uniform that you had been issued in the beginning is tattered.

AM: I had a suntan shirt and a pair of pants, which I hacked off and made shorts out of them, and the shirt, I cut the sleeves out of them, and, then, we had a number on here.

EB: Was it a button-up collared shirt?

AM: Yes.

EB: Okay, so you cut the sleeves off. Did you still have shoes?

AM: Well, our shoes were starting to go by this time, through the months of the war and everything, those GI shoes. … You began to see homemade shoes and go-aheads, and things like that. It was very difficult because it is so hot over there. It can rain and then the sun comes out, and it just freezes this mud into this sharp, razor-like things, that you had to walk on. It was really brutal.

EB: Had you had a shower at this point?

AM: No.

EB: Not since Corregidor. How long had this been, since you had surrendered, to Cabanatuan, was it a couple of weeks?

AM: Well, when we left Corregidor, it took us the day to march and ride the boat to get to Bilibid, and there weren't any provisions there for anybody, except for the people who were already there, that knew the trade. … On Corregidor, when we were at 92nd Garage, out there, and all the groups, they finally let us go in the ocean.

EB: You got washed off that way.

AM: We got washed off and everything, but it left saltwater on it.

EB: Did that peel your skin?

AM: Yes, it really is worse. Saltwater is terrible if you can't wash it off with fresh water.

EB: You are at Cabanatuan and you wake up and there is no orders and you're sitting around and they're talking about chocolate, how long did that go on for?

AM: That went on for, let's see, … the time that I was there I never was on a work detail, or anything like that.

EB: Were there others that were on work details?

AM: They were starting to build up farms, and wood gathering, and things of that nature. … Then they had the guys [that] were dying, so many per day that they had a burial detail, that was the world's worst, of course. I didn't get caught into that, but other than that, there wasn't much going on until after I left.

EB: I know my grandfather was in Cabanatuan, and he said that he volunteered for a work detail because these conditions in this camp, he could see the writing on the wall, and guys were dying so fast he actually volunteered on a work detail. Did that ever cross your mind, that you wanted to get out of camp?

AM: Well, we really weren't there long enough. We were kind of lackadaisically going along, getting a little bit to eat and getting a little bit to drink. … Then Spence came to me one day and said, "You know, … they're asking for a work detail of a hundred and fifty men to go out on a work detail." I said, "No, I know the conditions here, but I don't know the conditions there." I was always a dragger in a case, but he talked me into it. … They gathered us together, I don't know, a day or two later, and we got back, marched back in, and we got in the boxcars and went back to Manila and, once we got to Bilibid, we got on trucks and they took us out Dewey Boulevard a ways and to this community and we pulled up in front of this school. It was obvious that it was a school, and they marched us down there. I've got a drawing of this. Down along the right are rooms, and I was in room five, and they put a guy in charge of each room, ours was Ward Lowe, he was a super guy, a Navy man.

EB: What were you doing there?

AM: Well, we got in there, and they put us in the rooms first, and a couple days went by. … I was accosted by a Chinese interpreter, and he said, "Do you know anyone who knows how to cook rice?" I said, "Yes, I know how to cook rice." I didn't know what the hell I was talking about.

EB: You thought if you were close to the food you would probably get some?

AM: Yes, and so I was a cook, … for several months, and then I got sick, and they put me in the hospital room and I wondered if I was going to come out of there alive. … I can't remember

now, I remember that there was an American doctor there and he came in and he, finally, got me back on my feet again.

EB: What did you have, you were just sick? You didn't have malaria.

AM: No, I didn't, but I had beri beri. My legs were swollen, I had pellagra, and, finally, a Japanese doctor came in and said I was good enough to go to work. So, I lost my cooking job, and then we had to march out to the airfield, and that's when the Nichols Field detail started. We built a little railroad track and we were going to, I have photos, I cannot describe how much dirt that we moved. We moved this massive amount of dirt with pick and shovels and little cars.

EB: You were actually making an airfield?

AM: Yes, we were building a runway.

EB: Building a runway for the Japanese.

AM: For the Japanese.

EB: How did that make you feel?

AM: That made us feel rotten, and it was terrible hard work.

EB: Forced to work, but forced to help the enemy operation.

AM: Exactly, exactly. It was very hard to take, but you had no choice.

EB: Right.

AM: Go ahead and get your brains beat out.

EB: Spence was with you at this point also on the Nichole Field detail? You two, again, were again keeping each other going.

AM: Yes. Spence and I were together. We had a car together. Two men to each car, and you would fill these things up and push them down and dump them, go back in and get another load. It started out, we filled about eight or ten cars a day, and then it finally got up to twenty-two ...

EB: At any point did you think about sabotage? I know a couple of men have talked about it.

AM: We thought about escaping. … We were plotting and trying to rationalize what opportunity we might have to get out of there.

EB: You thought if you could get out of there and reach the Filipino guerillas. Is that what you thought?

AM: Well, get to the mountains, you know, but the problem was that you really didn't [have a chance]. You were out in the open, and there was guards watching you all of the time, while you were working, and so forth, so, the chance was really minimal to try to escape. … We tried to make it the easy way of doing our job. We would pile up rocks while we were filling the car, but you have to get your car filled when the other guys do, or you would get your back beat with a pick handle, so that's what is wrong with my back today.

EB: Oh, really?

AM: We really used to get hit a lot across the back with a pick handle. But, anyway, we were on this little railroad; we were moving dirt. But if I show you the picture that Spence drew, he was an artist, and you could see the magnitude of dirt in two years that we moved, you wouldn't believe it, wouldn't believe it.

EB: How long did you say you were on this detail?

AM: Two years.

EB: Two years on this detail.

AM: To the day.

EB: Wow. So you thought about escaping, but you never thought about anything you could do, slip a rock in where the dirt was, or any sort of sabotage? You just wanted to survive.

AM: You just had to keep yourself away as much as you could from getting a beating, because some of my friends were essentially beat to death. You know, they would carry them out and you would never see them again. … You didn't want something like that to happen, it was insane, as long as you could lift your arms and legs.

EB: Was this the last detail you were on for the rest of the war?

AM: Oh, no. That was the first big one.

EB: Okay, so two years, what year are we up to?

AM: 1944.

EB: '44

AM: Okay, now. Then they come in one night and we were all lined up. We had about five hundred men at that time, and they called out two hundred numbers. My number was *kujiraoka*, ninety-six, and they called my … number, but they didn't call Spence's. … So, they said the next morning these two hundred men be ready to leave, so, I was ready to leave. So, what was I going to do, you know? I had a little handful of stuff, belongings and so forth. … They trucked

us into Bilibid Prison and then we got on the boxcars and went up to Cabanatuan Camp One, which is the first one out, and we were there for maybe, maybe a month.

EB: You were separated from Spence.

AM: Yes, I left him there and that was the last time I ever saw him. The last time. Then I went, after this short period of time, … I was taken back to Bilibid, and then Japanese doctors looked us over and then I knew what was going to happen. We were going to be put on a ship. … So they marched us down to the ship.

EB: You just had a feeling, or they told you?

AM: No, I just had a feeling because they had been taking people, out according to the guys at Bilibid, on ships to Japan. So, on August, like, 27, 1944, I boarded this ship with, we had, I think, I don't know how many we had anymore.

EB: What was the name of the ship?

AM: *Noto Maru.*

EB: *Noto Maru*.

AM: Yes, and I have photographs of it and everything.

EB: Yes. How did you get these photographs? Did someone have a camera?

AM: These things that I've accumulated [are] since the war. I have historian friends who I worked together.

EB: You didn't actually have a camera.

AM: No, no.

EB: Okay.

AM: No, these pictures came to me later.

EB: Okay.

AM: … Then we started out. We had an idea we were going to Japan, but you never knew. The first big bunch went to Mukden, Manchuria. You really didn't know what the hell was going to happen to you.

EB: What were the conditions like on the ship? They lowered the food to you, you were down in the hold.

AM: We were down in the hold. We … [would] each go down this vertical ladder and go back and sit up against the man behind you, and you couldn't even lay down or anything like that. … When we got the thing packed, why, the next day, probably the next day, next day or day and a half, why, we sailed. We headed north out of Manila Bay and we went directly to Moji, Japan.

EB: You didn't stop in Formosa like …

AM: No, like many did, we didn't.

EB: How long was that trip?

AM: From August 27th to September 6th. We were bitching about how bad it was, and, when we listen to some of the other guys who were ninety days on these things, why, we were on a pleasure cruise. The only problem was that the only thing we got to eat was, it's a grain.

EB: Lugow?

AM: No, we didn't get any lugow. We didn't get any rice. It's stuff that I can't stand the sight of now, they put [it] in soup, but, anyway …

SH: Barley?

AM: Barley. You hit it right on the nose. … I can't stand the sight of it, it was brutal.

EB: It reminds you of the ship?

AM: Well, it was brutal. It generated gas, and you'd hurt so bad, and they had an old tub, about this big around, at the bottom of the ladder, that was a toilet.

EB: *Benjo*?

AM: Yeah, the *benjo*. Once in a while, we got up on a deck and stand around up there a little bit.

EB: They would let you look out?

AM: Yes, I didn't get to do that very much on those amount of days, but I met more friends on this boat. But I lost all of my friends. They were back there at Nichols Field. … I went through an ignorance, I said, "Well, Spence will be coming along on one of these ships and maybe we would get back together," not realizing that once the ships got up there, they spread the prisoners to northern Sapporo, and every place, you name it. … It was brutal, it really was brutal. We didn't have any room to lay down. Finally, the guys, they saw a ledge around up there and some of them began to climb up there and make their beds, and, finally, we got settled where we could lay down.

EB: Right.

AM: It was brutal, that's all I've got to say.

SH: Did anybody try to organize sleeping, or were the Japanese down in there with you?

AM: The Japanese, they didn't come down in there.

EB: Where did you land in Japan, down at the bottom?

AM: Suwa, or, excuse me, Moji.

EB: Moji, okay. You said it was a shorter trip so it must have been more southern.

AM: Most all the prisoners were landed at Moji that were going to Japan. … Then from there we went by train to Tokyo.

EB: To Tokyo. What did you think was awaiting you in Japan? Here you were fighting a war with these Japanese, thousand and thousand of Japanese, millions?

AM: It was kind of, we didn't know what to expect. We had been mistreated so badly in the Philippines.

EB: But, in the Philippines, you still had the Filipino women and children still supporting you.

AM: People tried to help us or get us food and everything.

SH: Here's Moji right here on the map.

AM: Okay.

SH: It was the northern end.

AM: The ship sailed in through this waterway some how. … Anyway, we got off the ship and they split us up. So, the bunch that I was with, we got on a train, a regular passenger train, dinky and small as it was, and we traveled north to Yokohama and Tokyo. We got off the train at Tokyo and we were taken to Omori, that was the headquarters camp. It was so-called, and it wasn't a very pleasant place. It had a Japanese by the name of Watinabe.

EB: Watinabe, that was his name?

AM: Yes, that was his name, and he was very cruel; cruel especially to American officers, didn't seem to pick on the British officers. There were British. That was my first encounter with the British.

SH: Was it?

AM: I was there and worked on different details, steel mills, and things like that. … Then one day they wanted seventy men. … I thought, … you know, since I had lost everybody, Spence and all my friends were all back there, I decide I'd see if I could get out of there. So, I went to Kawasaki, which turned out to be a gem. I was asked by an interpreter, once again, if I knew how to cook rice, and I said, "Yes," so he took me around to the kitchen and he told me to stay there and he brought in another guy, and his name was James McKay Sloan, he was a Scotch, and another guy by the name of Harris. … He was from Sydney, Australia. So, we made a great little group, and we had a lot of fun. We had a little Japanese, by the name of Matsomoto, who used to take us to the market where we would get rice, and *diagons*, and vegetables, and stuff.

EB: Did you find that the Japanese there were a lot kinder?

AM: Yes, really, it was an entirely different environment.

SH: Now was this Japanese, Matsuto, did you say?

AM: Matsomoto.

SH: Matsomoto, was he like your guard?

AM: Yes, he was my guard but he carried a wooden sword. We would ask him, "Matsomoto why do you got a wooden sword?" … He'd say, "That's to protect you when we go out." … We would go out; … we had bicycles that had three wheels on them, and a basket on the back, and that's where we would put whatever we had went and gotten. That went on, two of us would go at a time, and we'd have a grand time. We would stop at movie theaters and look at the pictures.

EB: Two of you, plus Matsomoto.

AM: He went with us all of the time.

EB: Okay.

AM: … Then, finally, the B-29s came, and when the B-29s came, they just wrecked everything. A lot of the roadways, and there are a lot of canals in Japan, and the bridges were knocked down. So, we had to go around about way to get anything we could get. Finally, we ended up going out to this place. There were some trucks sitting out there, and there were some people gathered around, and, apparently, we found out later that the people that lived in that area would come to that truck AA, or number one, or whatever, and get what rations they could get, which was incidental. So, we went there, and we were kind of fearful, because we were afraid the Japanese would turn on us, going away with the bicycles full of rice and *diagons* and stuff like that, but they never bothered us, or anything like that.

EB: Who were you making the food for?

AM: We were cooking for the prisoners. … We had another guy, another scotch fellow, who was a kind of a dog robber for the Japanese, and they had a superior food, from us, of course, but

we made out. We stole flour, it was a flour mill, and we had another little fellow, who also worked for the Japanese, and his name was (Tagaibiachi?), and he would steal the flour, and we would bake little bread, and cakes, and stuff like that. … Then, we would package it into a flat thing and stick it inside his clothes, so, he could take it home to his family.

EB: You really did get along with him.

AM: Yes. I tried to help him out after I got back down there, but Americans were not having it at all.

EB: None of these guys were soldiers, they were just Japanese civilians.

AM: Matsomoto was a civilian, and Tagaibiachi was a civilian. But, we had a soldier group there, and a lieutenant was the commander, the camp commander, and, in general, we were treated fairly well there.

SH: What did you call this Scotsman that was helping the Japanese?

AM: James McKay Sloan.

EB: A dog runner did you say?

SH: Was he the dog runner?

AM: No, he's the cook with me.

SH: Okay. Who was the other Scotsman?

AM: He was, his name was John something, he was a younger fellow. … He kind of served the Japanese. … That's what we called a "dog robber."

EB: Dog robber.

AM: In the Navy, that's a Navy term.

SH: Is it?

AM: Yes.

SH: What is a dog robber, was he aiding the enemy, is that what you meant?

AM: No, he was just waiting on the Japanese, serving them.

EB: Sort of sucking up.

AM: Yes. That just.

SH: He was ordered to do what he was doing.

AM: He was ordered to do it. He better do it, or he'd get his head knocked off.

SH: Okay. So he was like an orderly to them.

AM: Yes, an orderly, and it was better than working in the flour mill.

EB: How long were you there for?

AM: I was there for several months until …

EB: You were into 1945 by now?

AM: Yes, yes. … It was in, well, first B-29s came over, like in December. The first one we saw, they chased us in the so-called bomb shelter. But, it didn't amount to much. … We heard this plane, and we saw the contrails [or "vapor trails" are condensation trails made by the exhaust of aircraft engines] as it went across. It was only one. … I now know some of the crew, that I've contacted them or written to them in e-mail. Anyway, they flew across Tokyo and we could only see the contrails, we couldn't see the plane at all, and we used [the contrails] to determine that was an American plane.

EB: You did, so how did that make you feel?

AM: Oh, boy. [laughter] … The Japanese said, "No, that's a Japanese (Skoki?), it's not American." So, all the antiaircraft guns, about three thousand million of them took off, and there were bursts … going off, you know, a thousand feet below, or two thousand feet below the B-29s. … We told the Jap guards that he would be back with many friends.

EB: You instilled a little fear in the Japanese?

AM: Yes, they were kind of wondering why we said things like that. Of course, it happened a short time later, the B-29s came over; they were everywhere.

EB: Were you thinking, "Finally, the Americans are coming for us"?

AM: Yes.

EB: And that made you feel …

AM: Wonderful. Wonderful, absolutely.

EB: That sort of gave you an extra push to keep going?

AM: You betcha.

SH: Were you fearful that they would be bombing where you were?

AM: No. We were so glad to see American planes, we didn't care where they bombed. [laughter] They did hit some camps, but they didn't hit mine.

EB: Did you notice the Japanese were becoming more skittish? Getting nervous?

AM: Yes.

EB: Well, did they treat you any differently?

AM: Some, you know. But, the one thing that happened that was, I guess, it was kind of hilarious when you think about it. We had had a Scottish sea captain whose ship was taken by the Japanese in the Indian Ocean. He was in our camp. He had a very good friend in the German Embassy, strangely enough. … He received information from this guy in the German Embassy; don't ask me how. I think it was Koreans that they did this, but, I don't know. But, anyway, when Germany fell, Matsamoto came in one day and we jumped on Matsamoto and we said, told them about Germany falling, and what happened, and all this stuff. Of course, he went berserk, ran around and got the captain, or whatever, the lieutenant who was in charge, and then they brought in the *Kempeitai*, the secret service, and they beat us around, us guys in the kitchen, for talking about this because they didn't know it yet. [laughter]

EB: Did that change your relationship with Matsamoto? That he went and told.

AM: No, we didn't pay any attention to Matsamoto. We used him like a tool.

SH: Had you learned to speak a little Japanese by this time?

AM: I learned to speak a lot of Japanese.

SH: Did you? Okay.

AM: In Nichols Field was a little Navy man that was a shoe man. He kind of tried to mend our shoes, if at all possible. I approached him one day and I said, "You know, I would really like to learn Japanese, can you help me?" … He says, "Yes, I will. We can work on it." … Then, any time I had an opportunity, I would go and he would teach me.

SH: How did he know Japanese?

AM: He knew it fluently. He was from some place in China. He wasn't a Marine, he was a Navy guy. I don't understand exactly the connection, but …

SH: Was he a US citizen?

AM: Yes, yes.

SH: Was he Chinese?

AM: He was in the Navy, Navy. He was a Navy guy.

SH: Okay, but he wasn't Asian at all?

AM: No. He was pretty old compared to me, but I learned a lot.

EB: Did you think learning Japanese would help you survive? That they would respect that you tried to learn the language?

AM: It didn't work that way. I got speaking Japanese one time at Nichols Field, where I learned, and they hung me up on those bar things in that kids' school yard, and they built a fire under me.

EB: They built a fire under you?

AM: They did.

EB: You had to hold yourself up there?

AM: No, I was tied up by my arms, and I was hanging. … It was like a miracle that happened. A big car drove into the front of the school, and I recognized this man. He was a large, large, Japanese man; he had a pleasant expression on his face most of the time, so, that always appealed to me. But, anyway, he saw what they were doing and he about beat them to death. See, he got up on top of the steps of the school and he made them walk up to him, and he beat them with a scabbard on his sword.

EB: He beat the Japanese men.

AM: Beat them. Beat them across the head and shoulders and, everything else, and, I guess, he continued later on over in their quarters. So, that got me out of that. I got some pretty hot feet, but, that was all.

EB: Did you tell him why you had been up there?

AM: No, I, there was no conversation. He saw what was happening and …

EB: There was some people who didn't condone this behavior.

AM: Not really, there were some.

SH: Do you know this gentleman's name? Not gentleman, but this Japanese officer's name?

AM: He was an admiral. … at one time I knew his name, because he told me.

EB: He told you?

AM: He told me what his name was, but, it is long since lost, you know.

EB: Right.

SH: He told you at that time what his name was?

AM: Yes.

SH: Oh, really.

AM: Yes. He said, "I am the," he spoke fairly good English, he said "I am Admiral So-and-So. I have jurisdiction of this district." That's what he told me. He told me to go back to my room. With my feet smoking. [laughter] He really saved me.

EB: Yes, I can't imagine.

AM: That was a close call, it really was, because these guards were vicious. They were previous service people, who had been brought back up north, that were no longer considered as military, and so forth.

EB: To go back to when the B-29s were coming. You are in the camp and Europe had fallen. Did you think any time now?

SH: Any day now.

EB: Any hour.

AM: Not really. We were trying to figure out how this was all going to take place. Yes, the Americans had complete air supremacy over the Japanese everywhere, and, something I didn't tell you that is interesting; as we would march out to the airfield from (Pasai?) school, why, the Filipinos would hold up little cards, neatly printed on it was "the battle of Mid way is taking place," "this is taking place," and "this is taking place." They were keeping us up on everything.

EB: Would they sort of hide it from the Japanese guards?

AM: Oh, yes. They wouldn't dare let them [see], why, if the guard saw them, they'd be dead. So, they would hold them up, and, whoever happened to be going by at the time that they were held up, they would bring the information back to camp and spread it around. So, we knew when Guadalcanal fell, and all this string of victories that, finally, we started having from Australia on up.

EB: The Japanese they tried to hide it from you as best as they could?

AM: Oh, they had a propagandist. They even showed us movies of planes, American planes, being shot down up in, when they went up to Alaska. There was all kinds of things to break down morale.

EB: Right.

AM: But, in most cases, most of us, we just snickered at such nonsense as that. We knew better.

SH: What did they tell you when Roosevelt died?

AM: Well, we knew about Roosevelt dying the very next day.

EB: They told you that.

AM: Yes. They told us that. They thought that was a major victory.

EB: Did you have anything to say about that to them?

AM: No. Well, some guys did. There were some guys who had that little rapport with some Japanese guards, most of it was jokingly, and so forth. But, information passed, and we always knew what was happening, because of the underground, and these fellows, the underground, would put type- written sheets, they would hide it out on the airfield where we worked, under rocks. Rock B, somebody was given that responsibility to go to that rock and see if there was any new messages.

EB: Really.

AM: So, we had quite a few people up in the mountains that were keeping us posted, the guerillas, and so forth.

SH: This was when you were still on the island.

AM: No, this was really when we were working out on Nichols Field.

EB: Once you got to Japan, they hid it a lot more. There were no guerillas there, obviously.

AM: No, but when we got to Japan, we had this guy in the German Embassy feeding it to Captain Cant, who fed it to us, so, we knew all major events. We knew when they attacked Midway.

EB: Did you have a Japanese newspaper, or radio, or anything?

AM: We really didn't have a radio. We were accused of having a radio when we found out about Germany falling. They literally tore the camp apart looking for a radio. … Of course, we didn't have a radio; we learned through Captain Cant. They slapped us around, kicked us around a little bit, and that was the end of that. But, we knew, of course, when the B-29s started coming

over. The Navy and the aircraft carriers were right off of Japan. … They were sending in this, absolutely, flights and flights of Navy planes, fighters and dive bombers, and so forth. They were just hammering. Of course, I was in Kawasaki, in Tokyo, when all this bombing was going on.

EB: Then this is going on for a little while. It is getting worse. The atomic bomb, did you hear about it?

AM: All we heard, this is farther on, that was where I ended up in prison camp. … So, we learned that Hiroshima was struck by a large bomb, and much damage had been done there, and so forth. That's all we knew.

EB: Who told you this, the Japanese?

AM: The Japanese. One of the Japanese guards told one of our officers, as far as I can remember, clearly. … That was, we didn't know what he was talking about in the first place, and we didn't know if it was just BS, or what it was. … Then, more bits of information began filtering in, and, of course, they were shooting down B-29s, periodically, but, they kept them [separate]. … At that time, I was sent to Kawasaki at the flour mill, and these guys that they were capturing, they were keeping them completely separate from us, at all times.

SH: Were they in the same area?

AM: They were in the same area, but, we didn't know where. … We learned later that cooks, they were cooking the food at Omori and taking it over to this place where they had the B-29 guys. … That was a slick little trick that they played to be able to get over there. They said that the guys were sick and they needed to go over and take care of them. But, anyway, I wasn't in on that, or anything. But, they did learn that, the B-29 guys, that they were killing a lot of those guys. They were beheading them, and everything else that was cruel, because they hated them for destroying [Japan]. They thought that there was no way an American plane could ever fly across Japan. That was their belief, and they preached it. … Of course, a few days later, we had two hundred and fifty-nine B-29s go over, you know.

SH: When they would go over on these bombing runs, they were bombing in your area.

AM: Yes, yes.

SH: What about the devastation and the fires they caused, were you ever in danger from this?

AM: I, personally, was never in any danger. [At] Kawasaki, one picture I'll show you, the camp I was in, and everything, and you can see the bomb. This all happened. They took us out and took us back to Omori, because the bomb damage that was happening there. … One camp not far from us was hit, and so they, I forgot my train of thought.

SH: I was asking if you were ever in any danger.

AM: Yes, well, this one camp was struck, and several POWs were killed there. But, it wasn't very far from where we were at Kawasaki, at the flour mill, but, they took us out anyway, and they brought those guys over into our camp. … Ed Jackfert's here, and he is a very, well-known guy, super guy. Ed was in that group, and we got together in ensuing years. He furnished me with a lot of good pictures that were taken back there, and so forth. I really appreciated it. But, they had them there then, and, of course, there had to be …

SH: They sent you to Omori?

AM: They sent us to Omori, and I hardly got my seat warm, until I come in, and they called two-hundred and fifty numbers, or forty-five, and we got on a train and they took us out at Suwa, which is not so far from Nagano. So, that camp was, when you look at the pictures, it was beat up pretty bad. There were bomb craters all over, and the big flour mill, and the sixty-four grain silos, they were banged up pretty bad. … But, at first, B-29s were vectoring on that big grain silo. Well, when we left by train, it was a passenger train, kind of, they're small and very difficult. Anyway, we went to, I don't know what the mileage is to Suwa, but, now where we were there is a village, a nice little town called Chino, and that's really where the prison camp was. They invited two Japanese students that my wife and I had for several years. We had one who became a doctor and became very good friends, and we attended his wedding, as part of the wedding party; it was really lovely. But, anyway …

SH: They sent you by train from Omori to Nagano?

AM: Yes, well, we didn't go to Nagano, we went to this town Suwa. We went by train and we got off, and there was nothing there but this little train station, and we walked across the road and got on trucks and they took us up to the new camp. It was a brand new camp, new lumber and everything, and it was an iron mine. I had this terrible fear, all through all of this, that I would get sent to coal mines way down in the ground, like many of my friends were. … As it turned out, it was a surface mine, and I worked on something else anyway. But, anyway, this Kazoto's wife, that we went to their wedding, she became very interested in this POW thing, talking to me there at our home several times, and everything. … So, she said they were having a fiftieth anniversary there in Chino, at this camp, and everything, and they wanted us to come over. So, they paid for a business class airfare over and back, and the hotels, and everything. … Of course, it was very enjoyable meeting all of these people; people that I stole potatoes from when I was a prisoner and everything. … When we broke up, why, my daughter and Marjean went with one of the priests down to Koyoto. … I didn't want to go; I was fagged out, I really was not very well. So, Kazoto and his wife took me home, over on the west side of Japan. … I stayed with them while they did that. Then we came back to Nagano to Kazoto's father who had a host hospital there. … We really had a wonderful feelings for Kazoto and his wife and the family, and everything. We love them and their children, child and everything. But, as just a side-light, that's my friend in Brisbane, Australia, who has a web site for Corregidor, and I supplied a tremendous amount of pictures and battery histories and things like that to him. He said he took my [book], I had thirty-five chapters written, and he says, "I think you should kind of get closure for this, by that trip that you took over there, and you met all these people and went all these places." So, consequently, I'm just about finished with it. I'm trying to coordinate it with Vicky, who has more modern memories then I do. I can remember stuff sixty years ago that I can't

remember some of these more recent events. So, anyway, I am in the process of writing that last chapter for the book.

EB: You mentioned your wife's name; for the record, what's your wife's name?

AM: Marjean.

EB: Okay.

SH: When you were sent to the mine then, what was your job, you said that you had a different job?

AM: I worked on a smelter; and how we got this all going was Yashuyo. She wrote to me, and she talked [to me], drove up there, about seven hours, and she wanted me to do something, but, she said they didn't know for sure that I was true blue. So, what I did was, I drew a sketch of the smelter that I worked [at] without looking, and you wouldn't believe it, and several other sketches of the camp, and [she] sent them over there, and she showed those to the people and they went haywire because that was real. They could connect me to all of these events that happened. .... We went over on this trip, anyway, and we had a wonderful time, as usual.

SH: Tell us then, about the end. You are working on this smelter.

EB: All of a sudden, was it just you weren't going to go to work today?

AM: You mean at the end?

EB: Yes, the very end of the war.

AM: The very end was kind of unique. The American torpedo bombers were flying over the tree tops and they dropped a note on a fifty-caliber shell, for a weight, saying, "The war is over, and come on down, we are occupying Yokahama," but not Tokyo. Well, we, some of the guys came to me since I could speak some Japanese and they said, "We want to go talk to the camp commander. Tell him to get us some trucks here and get down to the railroad station. We want to go home." We went over there and the first sergeant wasn't very happy about it, in the first place, but, the commander was inside, and he comes out, and I told him, I said, "The American Skokies are flying around dropping stuff, and so, consequently, we want to go home." … He says he has no orders, and so, "go away." … We hit him up once again, and [in] about two days, about two days after that, early in the morning before light, we heard all this racket outside, and there were buses and trucks and old cars; these old, old, apparatuses for us to ride in. We couldn't all go at one time, but, we went down to that same little station, and we got on a train. The first train that came through was going to Tokyo; there wasn't anybody going to Tokyo in those days. It was all bombed out, and everything. So, we filled the train, much to the dismay of the conductor, and so forth, and we headed down. We got to Tokyo and then we got on electric "els" [elevated trains], like the old inner-urban cars that we used to have, and we headed toward Yokahama, and, in so much time, we arrived there, and there was all these green buses.

EB: How did you feel?

AM: We saw women. [laughter] … It was a wonderful feeling, it really was. They gave us all we wanted to eat, and sent a wire home, and then they zapped us out to the airfield at Suki air base. Much to our dismay, we thought we were going home, they put us on an airplane and we flew down to Okinawa, and we were down there for about ten days living in tents again. Then they flew us to Manila, where we started from in the first place. That's the tale.

SH: How did you get back to the States?

AM: On a boat, on a Navy boat that took twenty-two days.

EB: Twenty-two days.

AM: … It was the loneliest voyage I ever had, because I had lost all my friends. Now I still didn't know that Spence and those guys went down on the *Arisan Maru*. But, eighteen hundred of them, and, like, eight of them got out of it. Of course, I lost all of my friends, really good friends on that, and I didn't learn it until I got back to the States, and I went out to see Spence's mother to find out what she'd heard, and that's when she told me that he had went down on the *Arisan Maru.* [Editor's Note: The *Arisan Maru* was a "hell ship" that was torpedoed by an American submarine on October 24, 1944. There were 1,800 POWs aboard, and 1,795 died. It sank in the South China Sea, making it one of the worst naval disasters in the history of the United States.]

SH: Did you stay in the military?

AM: No, I was very bitter. I felt like they had done us wrong. For instance, I got one raise in rank, and we are speaking for five years in the Army, three and a half years in prison camp. You could have been a major general, or something, by that time, you know, the rapid way that they gave out [rank]. But, they didn't; they gave us one raise in rank, you know, which cut down by far the money that we'd get, so, we just get a little pocketful when we got out. Otherwise, I would have stayed in; I liked the service. It's very unfortunate.

EB: So your parents were, "You're alive, oh, my, God!" They thought you had died, right?

AM: Yes. They thought so. They finally learned, when I sent one of those little cards, that I was alive after a year and a half.

EB: Is there anything else that you wanted to add?

AM: Oh, I got a million things if we had the time.

EB: I know, I know.

SH: Well, we thank you so much, and really do appreciate that you have taken this time to talk with us.

AM: Well, I try, if at all possible. I speak to children at schools and universities, and stuff like that, to try to get [the story out]. Nobody knows anything about the history. Somebody sees my cap, and one guy asked me yesterday, "Was this a boat?"

SH: Yesterday?

AM: Yesterday.

SH: They asked if Corregidor was a boat?

AM: Yes, he didn't know what it was.

EB: I know, that's why we do this, because I have seen too many kids in history classes that don't read the book, or if they do, it's a paragraph this big: "The Philippines surrendered and a bunch of men died. "

AM: They are learning nothing, and the college students that I speak to mostly, they really jump on this stuff. They really enjoy it, and they would listen to us for days.

EB: We would, too.

SH: We would be right there. Well, I know that you need to get back and get your medicine, and get something to eat, it's late in the afternoon now, so, thank you, again.

EB: Thank you so much.

AM: Okay. I'll get a severe tongue lashing because I forgot my medicine.

EB: They'll be happy that they have this.

---------- END OF INTERVIEW ----------

Reviewed by Elaine Blatt 3/30/2008
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 4/30/2008
Reviewed by Marjean McGrew 7/08