

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Veterans Project

World War II Experience

O. H. 109

JAMES P. BENNETT

Interviewed

by

Mark D. Dittmer

on

October 3, 1978

## JAMES PETER BENNETT

James Peter Bennett was born on February 25, 1912, the son of George and Teressa Bennett. He grew up in Forward Township, Pennsylvania where he received his early education. On April 1, 1931, Bennett enlisted in the United States Army and was assigned to the Infantry, Motor Transportation, Quartermaster, Ordnance Corps, and Adjutant General's Department Area Service Unit.

During World War II, James Bennett was captured by the Japanese in Bataan, Philippines and was a prisoner of war for three and half years. He was confined to prisoner of war camps--Camp O'Donnell and Cabantuan, Philippines, plus work details in the Philippines, Island of Kyushu, Japan. Serving the Continental United States, the Philippines, and China, Bennett's military occupations include Rifleman, Machine Gun Company, Ordnance Supply, Quartermaster Supply from clerk to Senior Supply Administrator with the Philippine Ordnance Department, Philippine Islands, and his last assignment, Post Sergeant Major, Camp Picket, Virginia.

Bennett was recognized with many awards, including the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Army Good Conduct Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Medal with two bronze stars, World War II Victory Medal, National Defense Service

Medal, Philippine Defense Service Ribbon, Philippine Liberation Medal, Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, President of the United States Unit Citation, cited by letter by President Harry S. Truman, and a letter of commendation by General of the Army Bradley.

Mr. Bennett has been employed by the Trumbull County Probate Court since 1972, and he and his wife, Frances, reside in Warren, Ohio. A member of the American Legion Post, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars he is involved in assisting disabled veterans, their widows and dependents.

Terri Belloto

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INTERVIEWEE: JAMES P. BENNETT  
INTERVIEWER: Mark D. Dittmer  
SUBJECT: World War II Experience  
DATE: October 3, 1978

D: This is an interview with Mr. James Bennett by Mark Dittmer for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. This is an interview taking place in Warren, Ohio on October 3, 1978. The subject for discussion tonight is World War II Combat Veterans and POWs.

Now first of all, Mr. Bennett, I don't know that much about your background preceding going into the military service. Could you possibly talk a little bit about your background?

B: Yes. I was born in 1912, in a little town, Monongahela, Pennsylvania and went to the grade school and started in high school and they had the Depression on. In 1931, I was about nineteen years old and I enlisted in the United States Army. I was first assigned to a place called Camp Holibird in Maryland, which at that time was one of the few places in the United States that built trucks for the Army. When I first went in the Army, they didn't purchase trucks, they built their own and later on civilian industries. Then I moved over to the Philippine Islands.

D: Okay. Could you talk about that? One of the first questions about that background now, you enlisted into the U.S. Army, is this right?

- B: Yes, I enlisted. I made a career of it. I retired a sergeant major.
- D: At this time you were allowed to make a choice of schools of what you wanted to do in the Army?
- B: No. When I first went into the Army, they didn't have such a thing as schools. The fact is, there were very few people in the Army. When I first went in the Army in 1931, to give you an illustration, there were 115,000 men in the whole United States Army. By the way, at that time the Air Force was part of the Army. To give you an illustration: out of that 115,000 men, 5,000 of them were Philippine scouts in the Philippine Islands. They were spread all over the world. I've served not only in Maryland and New Jersey, Philippines, and Panama, and China. I was over there in the 15th Infantry, whenever they had what we called the international settlements. In other words, in those days very, very few enlisted men went to school.
- D: Okay. When you first went into the Army, what kind of training period did you go through?
- B: Nowadays, when you enlist in the Army, you go to a basic training center. We didn't have that. When you enlisted in the Army in my day, you went directly to your company because very few people went in the Army. In those days, people reenlisted because of the Depression. And then, whenever you went into a base--what you call a base today, we called a post in the old days; you had mules, whatever it was--they would take so many recruits and they'd be assigned to each company and then we would be turned over to a drill sergeant, and then he would train you. You would return back to your unit every night except for maybe two or three times during the training period you might go out on bivouac under his direction. In other words, you took all your small arms, your rifle training, everything with him. It isn't like today where you go to basic training center and ten men are assigned to a company.
- D: Could you give me a bit of an explanation or background for what you did preceding the United States entry in the war?

B: Okay. Let me tell you about the old Army. Now, the old Army, you didn't transfer in grades. Let me give you an illustration: You got into an outfit and were SOP [Standing Operating Procedure] after you went through your recruit drill, they called it. They call it basic training today. Then you were assigned to a company, and you did one week's kitchen police, and one week's guard, and one week's latrine orderly; and then if they found out that you had certain capabilities, if you were in the infantry, naturally, all you had to do was take care of your weapon and you did maintenance work around the post, cutting grass, all that. It wasn't done by civilians like it's done today.

Now, I, when I first went into the Army, was assigned to a motor transport, which is a place that did mechanical work, they needed people in supply, and I was trained in supply, not through a school. In other words, you were turned over to a noncommissioned officer, and he trained you in supply. Then after you became proficient, if you wanted to go to a foreign service, you picked where you wanted to go, you weren't assigned. "I wanted to go to the Philippines. I wanted to go to China." You would pick the infantry. Then they would place you opening for China, and by the way, do you know how long it took me to get to China?

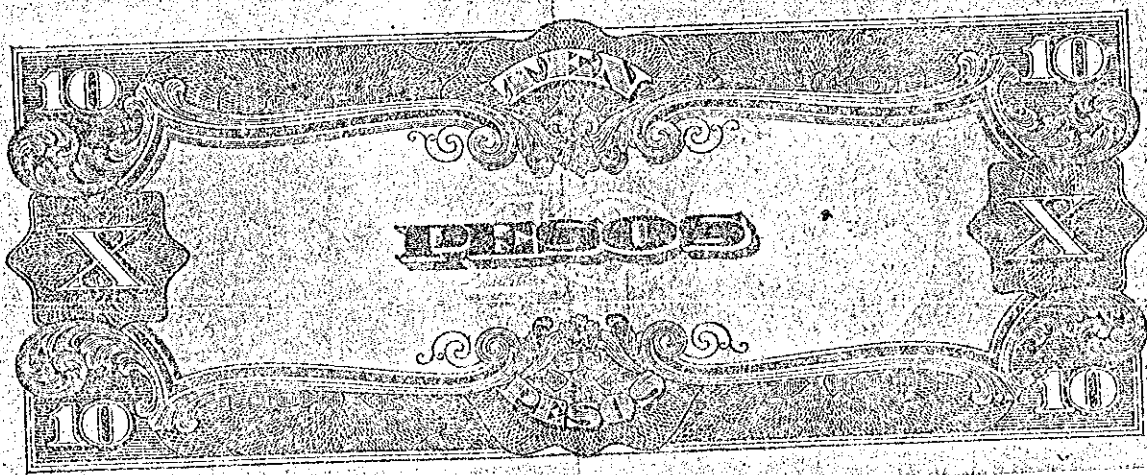
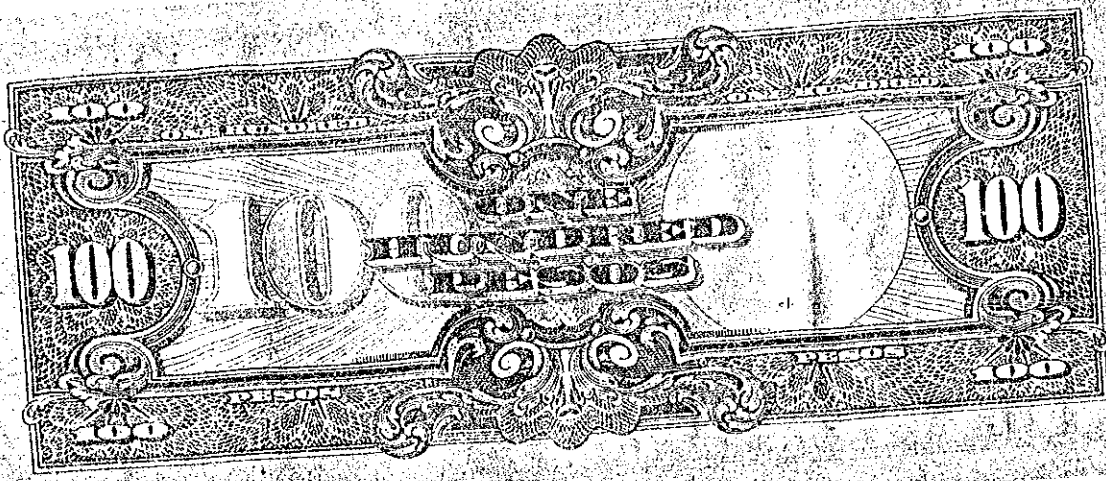
D: How long?

B: It took you anywhere from forty-five to sixty days. This was the route: I just transferred from the States to the Philippines. If I was a first class private or a corporal--it was a big deal in those days--I would be reduced to a private, because that way the rating [corporal] stayed with the company. I would go to the shipping center, and they would place you on a ship, and this was the route to go to the Philippines and China: If you were in New York City, you went to Fort Slocum, New York. From Fort Slocum, New York, you were sent on a ship that maybe went to Puerto Rico, and they dropped off supplies. Then when you went to Panama, it took two days to go through the Panama Canal because you dropped off supplies. Now the only place you got a freshwater bath was when you went through Gatun Lake in Panama. Then you went up to the Pacific side, and up the Pacific Ocean to San Francisco. Then you were taken to Fort McDowell for a few days, sometimes a few

months, and then if the ship was direct, then you went from Fort McDowell after five days, you were placed on a ship, you stopped off in Hawaii, and then you went to Wake Island, Midway, Guam. By the way, when I first went to Guam, they didn't have a port like they have today. The ship anchored out about four or five miles it seems like to me, and they delivered the supplies into Guam on a small boat. Then while they were unloading the boats, you would get a pass into town. Then you went to Manila. Now, if you were assigned to China, you'd stay in Manila another four or five days, in the Philippines, and then you made China.

Now, in the days when I first went in the Army, there were only three ships a year that went to China. In other words, you went there, say in March, July, and October. From October till March there wasn't any ship. Now if you went to the Philippines, there were four ships back. If you were in Panama, there were maybe sometimes a ship a month would come back to the States. It was altogether different than it is today. In those days, we didn't have any aircraft. In other words, the aircraft was shipped by boat, and then assembled in the Philippine Islands. When I first went in the Army, the whole United States only had five hundred aircraft. None of them could traverse over the ocean. Now, this was back in 1931, when we still had mules, we still had solid tires on the vehicles. We didn't get pneumatic tires until 1935.

Let me give you an illustration about the pay. We received twenty-one dollars a month; our rations were only twenty-one cents a day. We were fed good because the mess sergeant would go downtown, he would meet the ships coming in. If he was in a port town, then he would get fresh fish and vegetables and fruit. It isn't like today. Then when President Roosevelt was elected to office, we were cut down to seventeen dollars a month. In other words, what I'm saying is he gave us a fifteen percent cut. But, if you were in the Philippines, you got two pesos for one dollar, which was a lot of money in those days. If you were in China, you got anywhere from four to eight yen for a dollar. Actually, they called it "mex." When we were in China, they called the money mex. Someway or other, the Mexican government printed their money. They had money over there called mex; it was Mexican pesos, silver pesos.





Let me give you an illustration about some of the prices of the merchandise. Cigarettes were five cents a pack. When I first went in the Army, there was no tax. All military people got everything tax free. I can remember, for instance, back in the old days, if you owned a car, if you were fortunate enough to own a car, you only paid nine cents a gallon for gasoline, and five cents a pack for cigarettes. Now, the best bottle of gin in the Philippine Islands would cost you thirty-five cents American or seventy centavos--it was a nice gin called San Miguel--or if you wanted a bottle of rum, it would cost you forty-five cents or ninety centavos. Now if you were in China, the prices varied. It was just like today.

We all were fed good. It just depended on who your mess sergeant was. Most of the time you had a mess sergeant that had been there for years. They would call him Dinty Moore, because of the fact that the old Dinty Moore was the character they had in the newspaper, and he would feed you the best. But it was all done by the individual buying of his own merchandise.

D: Preceding World War II, how was the Japanese aggression felt throughout this time in this area?

B: Well, let me tell you about the Japanese. Now meantime, what I was telling you about, I went through the ranks, I made corporal. By the way, it took me six-and-a-half years to make corporal. I did return to the States in 1937 to go to school. By that time, six-and-a-half years later, everyone noticed there was a big change, because they could feel these things happening in Europe. This is in 1937; the war started in 1939. I had an opportunity to come back to the States. I went to a place in Metuchen, New Jersey. I can't even remember the name of it now. Raritan Arsenal in New Jersey. I went to school. Now what they'd do in the old days, you dropped your rating, but as soon as you went to the foreign service, they'd proselyte you: "Hey, I know that fellow, he was in so and so. He's a good supply man."

I also went to school in the Philippine Islands. I went to the Business School [Gregg Business College of Manila]. I went to the University of Philippines, taking small courses there, just like I went to

Youngstown U. and Kent State. It was always a habit of mine, to try to take some little education. And I became a supply administrator, in other words, a supply sergeant. Back in those days, we handled all the supplies. For an illustration: nowadays, the supplies are handled by a special organization, but in those days, the ordnance handled their own matériel, the engineers handled their own matériel, the quartermaster handled their own matériel. Well, I was assigned to a place and I represented the Ordnance, Engineers, and Chemical Warfare.

Now, let's go back to the Philippines, and the Japanese. When I first went to the Philippine Islands, it was just like living in Utopia. Let me give you an illustration: number one, I got a shave every day, four haircuts a month for a dollar. There was a company barber. When I went into the kitchen, in the mess hall to eat, there was a fellow that waited on me, he did my KP. Another fellow made my bed, waxed my floors, he did everything but handle my weapon. We had to clean our own weapon. He'd even roll my pack for inspection. But all this only cost about six dollars a month. So naturally, I loved that life in the Philippine Islands.

What you do when you get assigned in China, and you come back--and then it was hard to get back because in China, there were only four companies and they were spread out, and everybody would want to go there. So once you got there, it's hard to get back. So you had to take the next best place. And if you were a Far East soldier, you liked the next places. Me, I love the Philippine Islands.

The Filipinos were very, very friendly people. In fact, you went downtown, they owned all the bars, most of the bars, put it that way. They served you and gave you free peanuts; again, a soldier is always looking for a place to get the most for his money. He would love to go to a place where that broad, she poured your beer, and you got free peanuts. Of course at that time, they were filled with spies.

Now, the United States Government, the people in our government knew what was happening, so they had this place called Bataan. Now this was over here. Let me show you on this map. (Shows on map) Now, this is Bataan here; this is actually the Island of Luzon. And this area down here about two years or three

years before the war, the United States Government filled this peninsula up with matériel. What I mean by that is ordnance ammunition, parts for different vehicles. Of course, they didn't admit it but when we came in here, all this was filled up. This is where Corregidor is, this is in Manila Bay; this is where Corregidor sits here. By the way, before the war, the Japanese had already had that incident up in Shanghai. They had moved into China, in fact, my officer used to say--he was a West Point officer, Harold Everman--"Jesus Christ, less than six hundred miles from here people are at war." But we lived the old peaceful life, just like nothing was ever going to happen, because the people in Washington didn't tell us fellows on the street.

Now what happened in the Philippine Islands? I was Ordnance, I was in a place called Baguio, in the Philippine Islands, and the Philippine Military Academy was there. We helped service the Philippine Military because at that time, they had an American officer named Lee; he was liaison with them. He was an Air Force pilot, but he had something to do with the Philippine Military. Everybody came to Baguio. So in other words, I wouldn't say they were like that but we helped service them. Many times I'd say, "I helped service the Philippine Military," because they'd come in. They'd ask questions. They would want to know about supplies because Baguio was the rest camp for the military in the Philippines. They had three battalions, I remember they had three companies of Philippine scouts. I had the Ordnance, Engineer, and Chemical Warfare. Now back in the old days, we had a catalog called SNL.

D: What was that?

B: It was a Standard Nomenclature List. In other words, it meant that if you had a rifle, whatever the rifle was, you looked in that SNL. It said, if you go to war, for every thousand rifles, it tells you how many parts to carry. So as a hobby, with my supplies that I had--I did this in longhand by the way--I just came down, and every part in that weapon that I had, I found if I had enough spare parts in case we went into the field. In the field meant if you ever go to war. But it just happened I had machine guns. I had this battalion of infantry. So I had, all in longhand, I went down everything they had. I'm talking

about not only weapons, but also chemical warfare material, everything.

And it happened, a general came up there for an inspection. He came in there for an inspection and he came in the Ordnance. My office was known as-- it wasn't known as supply--I was known as the Ordnance, Engineer, and Chemical Warfare. So he came in there, and the question he asked was--this is about, I'll say about early 1941--he said to me, "Sergeant, in case we go to war, how are you fixed?" And I showed him this list I had of everything that I'd had--by the way, I had a Filipino work with me, too. He asked, "Did you actually prepare that?"

He asked me in my office. Well, they went down to headquarters and had a critique, and my officer called me down. They called me down to headquarters and they said, "Bring those papers you had that tells about all the supplies that you have."

Which, by the way, some of the things I didn't have was the stock for a .45, you know the stock. Do you know what a stock is? That's how you build it. They were serial-numbered items. You couldn't have that. That was controlled by the Ordnance depot. So whenever they'd put these things together, they'd want to know where that number is and keep it together. So he asked me about all these things. By the way, that was known as a starred item. A starred item was controlled by the depot.

He said to me, "Sergeant,"--he got these--and he said, "Who asked you to prepare them?"

"Well," I said, "I told you in my office, I did it on my own."

He said, "Why didn't you tell me that in the first place? I'm not holding this against you, because we like to have guys like you, soldiers that think."

Which was unusual in the old days. In the old days, they'd say, "Don't think soldier, just do the order."

And I said to him, "Well, I knew if I did something right then you'd give the accolade to my officer, he'd give me one, too."

They never forgot that. So, we were always trying to better ourselves. In fact, these people over there knew something was going to happen, so they created, where I was at, a West Point Prep School. Do you know what a West Point Prep School is?

D: No.

B: That's a school where you train young soldiers that have above average abilities to go to West Point. So they went all over the Philippine Islands amongst the Americans, the troops, out at Corregidor, out at Clark Field, the Air Force, Nichols Field, Fort Santiago, the infantry, Estelle the Mior, which is the home of the mayor. By the way, all these forts were named after, most of them were named after Spaniards because these places were taken over from the Spaniards in the Philippine Islands. In fact, my headquarters was known as Fort Santiago, and we lived in the officer's quarters from the old Spanish Army which was forty years before. So they brought these young people up to Baguio, and of course, as the war came along, they couldn't make it to West Point, but they were preparing.

So, slowly and slowly you could see they were increasing the troops in the Philippines, but they weren't as noticeable as the average individual would think, until about two or three months before the war. Then they started bringing in large units, and by the way, when they bring them in, they wouldn't announce them. I remember a lieutenant colonel telling me, "Gee, I can't even tell my wife I was promoted to lieutenant colonel because of the fact I can't tell her what unit I belong to because on paper, we're not supposed to be active."

Just before the war--I was Ordnance--they asked me to accompany a group of civilians who were making an inspection of all the government bases in the Philippines, and I happened to go from where I was living which was in Baguio, which is 175 miles north of Manila, to Aparri. By the way, they went by kilometer post over there. That's one thing about the Philippine Islands; no matter where you travel, you just look at the kilometer post and if it says 505, that means you're 505 kilometers from Manila. No matter, north or south, it tells you how far you're away from Manila, which was nice. If you were broke down, just say I'm at so and so kilometer post. I

think you see that on our highways, those mileage posts. Probably the police use them but the average civilian doesn't know that. But over there, everybody knows.

Well, anyway, we were up on Aparri, which is the northernmost part of the Philippine Islands, and this was in October of 1941 and that was actually you might say the first aircraft shot down by the United States troops, Air Force.

D: Shot down the Japanese?

B: Yes. But because it flew over the Philippines; it was never publicized. They never publicized it. They claim it crashed but the people I was with said it was shot down. Now when we would go up there, we would meet wealthy Americans, and they would tell us stories about, "At nighttime, the Japanese boats come in and they're unloading people here." And you know what they would do? This one man--I knew him very well--he made a trip into the Intelligence into Manila, and he would tell the Intelligence in Manila. They would just say to him, "Are you sure you're not dreaming?"

And he said, "Look, I'm a wealthy man." Back in those days, to travel that far would take two or three days. They didn't have the transportation we have here. They had motor vehicles, but they didn't travel as fast as they travel here. The roads weren't as good. He said, "My God, here I am, I traveled from wherever he lived up in the northern part of Luzon down here, and you're saying you think I'm crazy." You know what happened? After the war, they found out that some of these Japanese troops had come in three or four months before the war was declared.

Now, the boldness of the Japanese, and when I say boldness, by the way, which was a couple of months before the war, then you can see sort of animosity, if you run into groups of Japanese. I'm talking about business people, if you were in the areas of the Philippines where they were thickly populated. Now, of course, by that time, remember the United States Government severed diplomatic relations about six months before the war. So, naturally the fellows would get in an argument and go to their places of business, and maybe they'd start asking too many

questions, and some soldiers were smart enough to be suspicious if they were qualified spies, and a fight started.

But then, before the war was declared--now this is in northern Luzon--you could see a 107 ship convoy--it was a news item--off of northern Luzon. And according to the treaty we had--I don't know when they signed it--they weren't supposed to come down any further south than what you call Taiwan today. We called it Formosa. But they were already off of the coast of the northern Philippine Islands. But the United States still hadn't declared war, because they hadn't bombed anybody. They came down with these ships, they figured, well, it's just probably a threat. And finally they bombed Pearl Harbor, and then they came in and bombed us.

D: Okay, from the outset of the war now, did the Japanese move in rapidly?

B: Yes. Well, let me give you an illustration: I woke up on, we call it December 8 over there; the United States, people over here call it December 7. I woke up December 8, and it was my habit always to go to the mess hall and then I'd go directly to work. Even when I was sergeant major I always had the same habit. Like here now today, I don't have to go to work until eight-thirty in the morning, but I get up early, I'm down at the courthouse; just a habit I have. So when I was over there it was the same thing. So I had my breakfast, and when I was living up in Baguio now, this Baguio is as I said, 175 miles north of Manila. It's a beautiful, beautiful country. In fact, the weather's like here, around September or October, you've got to have fires at night, to go to sleep.

So I was going to work, walked down that hill, and I met the adjutant. His name was Frank C. Fellows. He said to me, "Sergeant, did you hear the news?" I was only staff sergeant then. I said, "What news?" He said, "Pearl Harbor has been bombed." It didn't impress me too much, because back in the old days when you came through Hawaii, Pearl Harbor maybe had four or five ships. It wasn't as big of a unit as it is today. Back in the 1930s, there was nothing there. If you saw a hundred sailors, that was a big deal. And he said to me, "It will take us four years before we go home."

Well, of course, he was wrong. It took us--he wasn't too far wrong--about three and a half, four years before we went. I guess it was about four years before we got back because I think I didn't get back to the States until about the latter part of October 1945.

Well anyhow, I go to my office, and right alongside of my office is the communication shack, that's the radio. We were all in one company; in other words, if there's signal men, we all ate in the same company. We were all on the same payroll but then we were on satellite from our units down in Manila. There were three or four guys in the signal corps over here, and I was Ordnance, Chemical Warfare and Engineers; and then we had the big quartermaster which had the commissary and the food, and so forth. After I got down, maybe about eight o'clock in the morning, maybe a little earlier, the commanding officer wanted all officers and key noncommissioned officers at headquarters. Headquarters was just, you might say, about a block away from where I was. So I went down with my officer, named Lars C. Jensen--the West Point officer had gone back to the States and Lars C. Jensen was my officer at this time--we went down, he was telling us about the Intelligence he had, that Pearl Harbor had been bombed, and he said, "According to the plan,"--G-2 is the Intelligence--"we should be down on the Lingayen Gulf," which was up this mountain five thousand feet about sea level. The road zigzagged thirty-three miles to get down to sea level. And he said, "Something is wrong."

So while we were talking, he wanted to know how much ammunition we had, and I said, "We have enough for seven days of intensive fire and by that time we'll be supported by the Philippine division." That's when he made the statement about, we should have been on the Lingayen Gulf. So while we were in this meeting, somebody gave the alarm: the aircraft was coming. So we all rushed out, and overhead was about seventeen aircraft. Of course, he looked at me and said, "Which way are they flying, sarge?" And I said, "I'm not signal. There's signal over there." I was just kidding. And signal said, "They're coming from the south, going north. Well, south was Clark Field. We thought they were American planes. He said, "Aren't you glad they're from Clark Field and going to bomb Tokyo?" He no sooner said that than 117 bombs dropped. What they were: they were Japanese planes



that came out over the ocean, and then swung out.

The people down in Clark Field and Manila, Nichols Field there, never even sent an aircraft up because they were waiting for the United States Government to declare war. That was the system we had in those days, we couldn't fight back. So what happened? They drop these 117 bombs and that's when the first American was killed. And then we all dispersed and I went to the magazine, we called it, where we stored the ammunition and the gas masks and all that, and I started issuing them. I told the fellows, "Look, take these back to your units. Tell your officers to break those hermetically-sealed containers and each of the gas masks, everybody." My officer alongside of me said, "Sergeant, what are you doing?" I said, "Sir, we are at war, no more accountability. We've got to get ready." In the meantime, we got the Filipinos and we started camouflaging because we thought they'd come back. Actually, it was just one hit and away they went.

So the next day, I was ordered to Manila, so I was coming down the mountain. I'm in the first bomber raid. Now, they hadn't bombed Clark Field yet, when they hit us, they planned to hit Clark Field that afternoon. So I'm coming down, I have a Filipino drive me down to Manila, and one time we stopped. They had steam trains over there, and the steam train let out this steam and I hit the ground. People said, "What is this all about, that Americano?" They didn't realize I'd been in the bomber raid and they hadn't. Anyhow, I finally get down to Manila, and my unit hadn't been in the bomber raid. I was staff sergeant by that time. I became chief storekeeper in the Philippine Islands. There was a major, I can't remember his name; it comes to me once in a while, he had a name like Rice or Fish or something. He was the chief storekeeper, and I was the senior enlisted. And they had a civilian named Vine; he was in charge of civilians. Now I had been bombed, but these other people hadn't, and what they did, the Japs, they came along and they hit.

Now they hit Baguio first because they thought General MacArthur would be there. They thought the officers would be there. The Japanese had an idea: If they'd knock off all the key officers, the enlisted men wouldn't know how to work because that's

the way their system worked. Well anyhow, after they hit us, then they went down and hit Clark Field, hit Nichols Field, hit Nielson Airport, and then they went over and hit the Navy. They hit Caviti, Olongapo, all the naval bases, and they were finally coming close, close to us. We were in Fort Santiago, and they were coming close to us.

I never will forget the first time they bombed us. When they bombed us--and Manila is a large city--we were at what they called the Port area, that is where all the ships were being loaded, and the people just ran away from that area. It just looked like a stream of ink going, blackness going. And finally the newspapers over there printed a picture and told the people, "In case of a bomber raid, stand fast. Find yourself a hole." Then they would show pictures of babies found after a bomb raid, because they couldn't move, and they weren't hurt. We didn't have any training on aerial warfare at all, nothing, not until the war hit, and then boom. I was one of the first ones in it and I knew what would happen because I had seen the way these things blew up. So my company, I would say, "Hit the ground!" And a lot of fellows would say, "What is wrong with that sergeant?"

Finally we had to evacuate Manila, and were going into Bataan. When moving into Bataan we were going to create a bivouac. A bivouac is your headquarters in the war zone. So when we had to create our bivouac, now we're the supply, of course our supplies were already there. The infantry is going to come in and that's where we are going to come over here. (Shows map) When we moved into Bataan--this is Christmas Eve of 1941--by that time Manila was about ready to fall, so we came in. This is Bataan peninsula. All the troops we had were supposed to come down here, but don't forget some of them were cut off. Now, we were coming over. You come all the way down, this is sea level, and up in here is, about right here (Showing on map) you are up in the mountain again. This is sea level, and this is the mountain. Then we had lines called. What we call lines, we are going to hold the enemy out, when we got our troops down in here, then they had the whole Philippine Army and all of MacArthur's troops you might say.

Corregidor sits about right here. One thing about Corregidor now, the defense of the Philippines was originally brought out that they thought they were going to come in by ships, so Corregidor had large guns to fire out at sea. No warships would come back in there because you'd never get by Corregidor. So what the Japs did, instead of coming that way, they came from the north, and brought their armies down this way, and this is where we had them bottlenecked. Now Corregidor's guns faced the sea, and very few of them could turn around and fire back this way. This is Manila Bay, and Manila sits back over in this area.

As we were going down to create our bivouac down on one of these curves--and I don't recall which one it was--we were coming down, and there was a curve in the road, and as I saw the Japanese planes, they were just flying over--just about Christmas Eve, yes, Christmas Eve--they were flying over and hitting things in the Manila Bay, and swooping around Corregidor once in a while. But every once in a while, they would come along and they would strafe this road we were on. So when we came down that road one day, I asked the company commander to halt the convoy, and I asked all the fellows to get out away from the road because I said, "Those fighter planes that are heading out that way are going to swoop around and come down this road, that's just a hunch I have." I never will forget that. And one of the men we had, one of our truck drivers--he was a fellow from up around Minnesota, or Wisconsin, I don't recall now--he asked me, "What's the matter? Are you a coward?"

"No, it isn't that," I said. "They're going to come down. They're going to strafe this road. Get off this road!" Well most of the people did. They got off the road, but there were some Filipinos in a bus and they decided they were going to sit in the bus. Well, you can just imagine what happened, whenever these planes come down and strafe and bomb that road, and they hit this Filipino bus; and there was a couple of truck loads of supplies with fish, and when it was over with, you couldn't tell the difference between the fish and the Filipinos. Everything was all bloody. This fellow, he never forgot that. He said to me, "Sarge, I want to apologize to you. I didn't realize you were in the first bomb raid."

When we came down into Bataan, in the meantime, Hong Kong and Singapore fell, and then to the south of us, the Dutch East Indies fell. When they fell, we knew, anybody that has been in the military, and knew a little bit about geography knew we were cut off. So all we had behind us was Corregidor, and the Japanese Army in front of us. Well, the Japanese Army tried three times. They tried three times, and this way our line broke. (Shows map) This is San Fernando Pampanga. San Fernando Pampanga is where old Clark Field was. Now when we came down in here, the first line was in Gua-gua, this right here. There was a railhead there. Then a couple months later we brought our lines back here to Lubao, and finally we came here, Hermosa. We set about right here, then finally came down to Orani. Then they held us here for a long time, I mean a couple months, because of the fact it was the rainy season and they were waiting for the dry season to come down. This is the Philippine Islands. Finally they made the big push, and they came down to Orion and Limay, and this whole thing broke.

During that time, we were running out of food and ammunition. To give you an illustration, any military man knows, you have to have mortar shells. We only had twelve hundred rounds of eighty millimeter mortar shells, not sixty millimeter. We had very few sixty millimeter; but just imagine fighting the war with eighty millimeter shells. Now we had one 5-5. We had a lot of ammunition from Bataan, but slowly and slowly, attrition fighting kept moving that away.

Then we tried to get some big guns from Corregidor. In order to use a big gun--when I'm talking about a big gun, I'm talking about a barrel of eight inches or twelve inches--you have to lay a concrete. It has to harden. This has to harden maybe for three or four months. We didn't have the time, and every time we would go to make one of those concrete bases, the Japs seemed to know where they were, and they would keep bombing that area.

It seemed like the fifth column we had, it was Filipino's. In the Philippine Islands, they had different political parties. Most of them were pro-American. Then they had what they call Sakdalista which was the pro-Japanese, and then the Falangista

which was pro-Spanish, which is also American. I can't remember what the pro-American party was. I do remember that the Sakdalista was the anti-American, and they were continuously uprising, and doing things like that.

Well anyhow, we were back in there, and they claim now, there were only 22,000 Americans. Now that includes the people on Corregidor, too, and a lot of our people we had, they just came in from the States, some of them as early as November 20, 1941, and the war was declared on December 8 as we called it. And they weren't even acclimated to the weather, let alone be ready to fight the Japanese.

We only had two tank battalions, one from up here in, somewhere in Fort Clinton I think it is, here in Ohio. I think Bay lost 77 men from that city, that area. The other one was from Wisconsin. But just one night alone, I think we lost 45 of those tanks. Now when we moved back into Bataan, remember now, we only fought four months and three days.

We would live on very, very short rations. We had the 26th Cavalry; we ate all their horses. We didn't have any refrigeration like we have today. What they would do was to keep a horse alive, or a caribou, they would cut it, and when they would deliver it to the company and it still had the hide on, with the brand and that iron shoe. But everybody ate it because there was very little to eat.

Now the fact that I was Ordnance and also infantry, you spent maybe three days with your Ordnance unit, and three days with your infantry unit, because the fact of moral. The Filipinos always liked to have an American with them. So we would be up in the front for a couple of days, then you would come back to your unit. Somebody else would go up and take your place, then the next thing you know, the other fellow, you'd miss him, he never came back.

The 75th Ordnance was our headquarter's company, and our unit was responsible for burning and blowing up all the ammunition in the Philippine Islands, that is, on Bataan. Now, the way we did it: we took all our bombs--we didn't have any aircraft--we took all our bombs and we put them in each what we call Ordnance magazine. Maybe this magazine would

have say six hundred one 5-5 shells. You'd put a couple of five hundred pound bombs and a couple of maybe a thousand pound bombs--we had very few two thousand pound bombs--and we would put them in there, and they had fuses on them. When they gave us the word, we were going to strike a match and then everybody had to get out of this area. So we knew when we were making those preparations, that we were going to surrender. Of course, back in those days, we believed in the Geneva Convention, the Red Cross, and all that stuff: they were going to treat us humanely. So anyhow, the night of April 8 or maybe a couple days earlier--I don't recall exactly--

D: What year was this?

B: Nineteen hundred forty-two. Our officers said to the mess, "Feed all the food you have. If you've got any sweets, make cookies, because tonight is the night we are going to leave this area." Of course, a lot of people thought we were going to get on a ship and make it to Corregidor. Each man in my unit had a vehicle, and he was to go into the ammunition area, strike a match, and within 32 minutes, come out, because they had 32 minute fuses on them. We were going to strike the ones closer, that is, the furthest point away to our exit area. So we did. We went in and struck the matches, and then we came out and we were heading down this little mountain we had which was called Little Baguio. Of course, they said also, whenever you would do it, "Try to keep your mouth open, because the first explosion is going to be pretty tough."

So just as we were going down this little mountain, which is 4400 feet above sea level, we were going to go down to this place called Mariveles here. This was our surrender point, Mariveles. Now we were going to go down there to surrender. We also had a large gun barrel that we had to get on this ship to go to Corregidor. Of course, if you could make Corregidor, you were also supposed to make Corregidor.

D: Now surrender point is called Mariveles?

B: Mariveles, yes, here it is, right here. (Showing on map) That's Mariveles in the Philippine Islands. As we moved out, to go down to the Mariveles surrender point, we had this large gun barrel we were

supposed to put on the ship to send to Corregidor. By the way, before we went down, the lines were breaking, and the infantry, what we called the line troops, were coming back toward us. We had guards that tried to keep fellows from going through that area we were going to blow up. Well, those fellows, after all, they had the Japanese firing at them. They had close contact with the Japanese. They didn't believe there was this many of them, and they rushed right through this area. Then all at once, she started blowing, and you can just imagine what it looked like, because as I said, some of those magazines had maybe five or six hundred 1-5-5 shells in them and, my God, they blew up in the air. Fact is, Corregidor thought we were counterattacking. I talked to fellows in Corregidor later, they thought we were counterattacking.

After the first explosion, my ears went, "Poof!" I said, "Oh, my God! I lost my hearing!" But I noticed later, I didn't. So then we moved down. We delivered this weapon, the gun barrel to the ship. We couldn't make Corregidor. There were too many people on it, and then we moved back to the surrender point. Our surrender point was Mariveles, 181 kilometers from Manila. Other fellows surrendered further away from Manila than we. They surrendered in places called Bagac, Olongapo, up in that area.

So in our area, there was an airfield there and we all assembled on this airfield. After we got there, and the Japanese, we could still hear them firing, and we couldn't figure out what they were doing, because of the fact that we had white flags. We used our bed sheets, anything they had from the hospitals, to indicate it was the surrender point. So after we were there a couple hours, maybe six, seven hours, I got the feeling, a gut feeling, that this wasn't the place to stay, and I asked my officer if we shouldn't encourage our men to pick up some food and walk into the jungle a little ways, because of the fact that I thought they were going to bomb this airfield. If they did, we wouldn't have a chance because the airfield was just head to head with trucks, and all kinds of vehicles; anything at all was just in there, and just butt to butt. So, we did. We encouraged some of our people to grab some cartons of food, and we went into the hills a little ways, and low and behold if it didn't happen. They bombed them and these trucks, many of them were destroyed.

A couple of days later, we came back to what we called the surrender point. That's when we had our first contact with the Japanese. They had that long rifle. Of course, we'd had contact with them on the front line but that was the first time we came that close to contact. So they started to screen us, and put us in a group of about a thousand men, and moved us down.

In the United States Government, when we'd capture a fellow, we take him back to Intelligence. Even though there is a large group, you take a certain amount back to Intelligence and they try to find out what is happening. But not them. Their idea of Intelligence was, "Tokei arimus, Okane arimo." Of course, at that time, we didn't know what they were talking about. What they were saying: Do you have a watch? Do you have any money? A tokei is a watch. If you had a watch, they took it away from you. If you had a wallet, they took that away from you, too, and then you got in a line, and away you walked.

Now, the first night we walked from Mariveles, up over this from sea level, to Little Baguio, down to Cabcabben, around that area. And that's where we had a hospital. We had a hospital in that area, too. So when we were in Cabcabben, which was sea level, the Japanese wanted to get their artillery up that Little Baguio Hill. We called it Little Baguio Mountain. It was four thousand feet up. They used us as a shield because Corregidor's guns could keep that part of the Bataan Peninsula under their guns, so the Japanese used many men for a shield there. Finally, after they got quite a few weapons up in this particular area, General Wainright evidently asked them to move his men out of the way so he could fire back; and they did.

We started walking up to Limay, Orion, Pilar, Samal, and Orani. Everywhere we'd go, they would change guards every five kilometers. Sometimes, in the hottest part of the day, they would put us in an open field while they rested, and when we were in that field, whatever there was to eat, we ate. Many times we would eat the leaves off the trees, and anything we could find, roots, because some fellows knew about the roots. We would eat the roots.



We went on up to Hermosa, and Hermosa you might say was where they first gave us a big general screening. And their idea of general screening was: anybody who had anything that belonged to a Japanese--if they found you with Japanese money--it was assumed that you killed a Japanese. If you had a Japanese helmet, you may have walked along a road, and the sun was beating down and you put a Japanese helmet on--they assumed you stole that from a Japanese, and they would kill you. This was a pretty bad place here, Hermosa.

Then we kept going up here to Lubao, which was another place that they treated us very badly. Of course, you might say it was bad all the way down, because every five kilometers they changed and we being ill-fed at the time, if you fell by the wayside, the Japanese just put the bayonet to you and away we kept going. What I'm saying, the people ahead of us, you could see where alongside of the road the Americans and the Filipinos had been dead for several days. The only time you ever got a drink of water, when you passed a stream, if you crossed a stream, or sometimes there were artesian wells which were close to the road, they made you take a drink of water. But if you ever tried to go away from the main road, they would fire.

We finally got down as far as San Fernando Pampanga, and a place I'm pretty sure was Anhelos, and then went up to this place here, called the MRR station, which means that they put us on a train here and shipped us northwest to a place called Nueva Cias Capas, and then we walked another twelve kilometers or fifteen, whatever it was to a place called Camp O'Donnell. That was our first prison camp, and the way you were assigned there, if there is a building, you had a place to sleep; if there is no building, you had to stay in that particular area. The stench was nauseating; people were dying; and they just couldn't handle it, just dying by the--oh God--by the hundreds.

So then, later on, they picked a group and they brought us back down to Cabcabben, back to this area and we started picking up all the material for shipment to Japan. We would load it on the ships. Slowly and slowly, the fact that this was a very bad area for malaria, people died and then you got

weaker. They brought us back to the camp, another camp called Cabantuan.

The one time, one incident that happened down here around Cabcabben, I recall, we were trying to lift a heavy piece of equipment, pick it up. And when we tried to lift it up, we couldn't hold it up and it fell down and one of the men, his leg was caught under it. It was a big roll of telephone cable and luckily, it was on soft ground. It broke his ankle but had it been on concrete, it might have taken his foot off. And luckily for him, again, he was located close to an American hospital. I never forget what I told him: "You are going to go back to an American hospital; those of us sitting here, working here, may die. You may lose your leg but you're going to be alive."

Three and a half years later, in the middle of the night, I was walking along, it was dark, and a fellow recognized my voice, and he said to me, "Sergeant, it's better to lose a leg and save your life." I didn't recognize him. I had forgotten the incident. "Don't you recall who I am?" I said, "No." He said, "Remember the time the fellow that that roll of telephone cable fell on his knee in Cabcabben and you said, 'You are going to go to an American hospital?' Well, that's what I did. Most of the time I was in the hospital." So he came out in pretty good shape.

Well anyhow, as I said before, all along this road here, there were many Americans who were too weak to walk; not only Americans, Filipinos, too. Then when we got up here to around Gua-Gua here, an incident happened. No, it must have been back awhile. It was getting close to San Fernando Pampanga. By the way, Pampanga is a province; that's where Clark Field is located. They have many San Fernandos, but you always call them by their second . . . it's just like the county it's in. Right here in Bacolar, I never will forget, the Americans were getting weaker and weaker, and some Filipinos came along in what we called the calesa. A calesa is that little cart pulled by the Filipino ponies. This one Filipino loaded several Americans on and was going to ride them to the, he knew there was a railhead in this area. The Japanese stopped the vehicle. They not only shot the Filipino, and the three Americans in there--there were three or four, whatever they were--but they also killed the pony. They wanted to set

the example.

So anyhow, we finally went to Cabantuan, then a couple of years later we were shipped up to Formosa. From Formosa, later I was sent to what you call Korea, and then later on, from Korea I was moved over to the island of Kyushu in Japan.

- D: When you were settled as a POW, how did you receive news from the States, or did you receive letters at all?
- B: They allowed the letters to come through; very, very few. Once in awhile a package would come through. Most of the time, when they would get the package, what we called the Red Cross package, they would eat it themselves. They didn't subscribe to the Geneva Convention.
- D: Did you ever get any help from the Red Cross at all?
- B: Well, if you want to call those packages; they would arrive in Japan. If the Japanese would give us all the food that the Red Cross gave them for the prisoners, we would live good, and we would have been clothed good, but they didn't do that. They didn't subscribe to the convention. When they would get it, they would leave it in the warehouses and eat it themselves.
- D: When you were in the prison camp, did you have a special government that the prisoners ran themselves or was it just completely native-manned?
- B: No, no we never had . . .
- D: You never had unit leaders or even within as POWs?
- B: We had unit leaders, but we were accountable to the Japanese.
- D: It's not like the Germans?
- B: No. No, they didn't let you run anything by yourself. In other words, everyday, there would be a Japanese come in and take control of you, and move you to wherever you were supposed to work, and move you back. You actually moved yourself, but the point was, he was in control of you.

D: Could you describe what a typical day was like in POW camp now when you got moved to Japan?

B: Well, it just depends on whatever work you had. If you were on a dock, you went out to work on a dock. By the way, when we were sent to Japan, that's a good one. Before we were selected to go to Japan, they selected, the group I was in there were five hundred. We thought we were going to be traded, because they gave us all new clothing--new hats, everything. Then they put us on a ship; this is in the Philippine Islands. The ship didn't have any cargo. So the next morning, the ship headed south, so we thought well, boy, they're going to take us down and trade us with some Japanese. The reason they did that was because in the Philippine Islands we had a lot of fellows who weren't captured, and they were known as guerrillas and they had contact with the American troops. When they would see a ship leave the harbor, they would give its course. Of course, it would head south, but then in the middle of the night they would turn around and the course was north. So we wound up in northern Luzon. I'm trying to think of the name of the port now. It's up near Vegan; and they loaded us up with chrome ore. Now, after they loaded us up with chrome ore, we didn't have the room that we had before. Then they placed us in a convoy and they moved us to Formosa. They would travel as close as they could to the coast and then they would make a run over the sea and we were in Formosa.

Now, when we got in Formosa--you call that Taiwan today--oh, my God, you never saw so many ships in your life. They were just loaded down with everything. And they let us go ashore for a few days, while they must have made repairs on this ship or something.

D: They let you go as prisoners of war?

B: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In other words, we were placed in buildings on the shore, and we would work, and they had work to do; we worked. And then they put us back on that same ship, and then we made the run to what we call Korea. And by the way, I have no love for the Korean. They were serfs under the Japanese. (laughter) They used to beat the hell out of us! They were like a colony of the Japanese. Then from Korea we went over to Japan. Now, when

you were in Japan, it just depended on where you were assigned. If you were assigned in a manufacturing plant, you went out and you made steel or aluminum or if you worked in a lumberyard, you worked in the lumberyard. If you were on the docks, you worked on the docks. It was hard work all day.

D: How did you ever receive news from the outside world as far as American military went?

B: Well, you learned their language. After all, we were prisoners three and a half years, and what you would do, when we first went to Japan, they told us, "Now, look you are going to have to learn our language, because there are certain communications." For an illustration, when we come out, you have to be counted every day. Every time you go in, you have to be counted. So for about four or five days, they taught us how to drill. They taught us how to give commands. In other words, if you were a non-com or an officer, you gave commands. For an illustration, I'm the sergeant, in other words, I'm what they call a "socho." I have fifty men. Now twice a day you had a count, in the morning and in the evening. Also, if you went anywhere on a work detail, you had to come out and be counted.

Now, you had to also have certain courtesies. For an illustration, I'm going to tell you I have fifty men. I am a section leader, and I am going to have my men count off. Now I'm going to tell you I have fifty men, but ten of them are going to be missing. Now, if those ten men are missing, the law is they will kill the other forty, which is you. So, you have to tell where the other ten men are. Now twice a day you did that. In other words, in the morning we called it "bango," which was morning call or evening call, which naturally means count, and this is the way we'd do it: First, if we were in the building, we had our hats off and whenever your hat's off, you bow; but you called attention first and then you tell the other officer or non-com, whoever he is, and he's got maybe two or three soldiers; he's counting, too. You tell him who you are. Let me give you an illustration. I have fifty men; ten men are missing. We're going to count. When that last fellow says thirty-nine, I'm going to say forty. Then we're going to tell him ten men are missing and where they are.

Now the first thing is what they believe in is a real loud voice to call attention. Also, you did that for two reasons: If you were on the outside, any time you saw a Japanese, a group of Japanese or if you had a group of people, you called attention: "KIOTSKI" [key ots key]. Now that would tell other people that there's a Jap around here; in case you're doing something wrong to hide. They're all little signals we had amongst ourselves.

Now I'm going to tell you I have fifty men. The Japanese comes in the barracks. My men are lined up, forty men and I'm the fortieth. Soon as he comes in that door, I say, "KIOTSKI!" Very strict attention. "SOYEN GO JU MEI." I just said I have fifty men. "GENZAI YON JU MEI." Forty are here. "JIKO JU MEI." Ten men are missing. I say, "BANGO!" [count off]. And when I say, "BANGO!" the number one man says one. He says, "ichi [1], ni [2], san [3], schi [4], go [5], roku [6], schichi [7], hachi [8], qu [9], ju [10]. I just counted to ten. It keeps going all the way down till that last man down there says, "San ju qu," thirty-nine, and back to me, "Yon ju," forty. Now I am going to say, "Ten men aren't missing here." Where they are: "Ni mei san patz." Two men are barbers. "Ni mei sui ji." Two men are working in the kitchen. "Ni mei jimsho shigoto." Two men work at headquarters. "Ni mei niushitzu." Two men are in the hospital. "Ni mei eiso." Two men are in the guardhouse. Of course, in the meantime he's counting.

Now supposing I had the work detail, and when I go on a work detail, I may have men from other companies, and by the way, I had one guy that was born and raised over there. I would give it to him so fast, you know what he'd tell me? "You give it to him so fast, he doesn't even understand his own language." He had a board. Did you ever see the glass we have and you can write on it? You put a piece of paper on it and you write? In other words, supply economy. You had a piece of window glass, kind of a colored, a smoked glass, then you can write on top and the paper background, we'd throw it out. You'd give him that and then it would show you that I'm so and so, and so and so, and then he would check it out. Sometimes you'd have men from other [companies]. Maybe sometimes I would have a hundred and fifty men, and I'd give it to them so fast--this is when we would be out in the training field. (laughter)

Oh, by the way, when I say attention, "Kiotski," we had to also say a courtesy to him. I would say, "Nara," which means all your eyes on him. "Norei" means front, in other words, you paid your respect. It's just like in the Army, you're saying, "Eyes right, eyes left, front." Now these people here, that said that sometimes I give it to them so fast I would be in error but they couldn't catch it. (laughter)

The point was, when we were in the Philippines--I only saw them kill ten men in Japan--in the Philippines, if one man is missing at a count, they would take ten out. Now for awhile there they would take ten healthy men out but they finally got smarter since, so then instead of taking ten men out of the healthy, they'd take ten men out of the hospital, because they wouldn't take healthy men out, they needed them to work.

D: Now were you rescued? In what point?

B: Well, now here you're talking about Intelligence. As I said before, you learned by learning a language. For an illustration, in a little time you could get a dog and you ain't going to beat him every day; and finally a Japanese soldier would come to you and say, "Nan heitai deska," what kind of a soldier are you? Well, if you were an Air Force man, you would say, "Air Force, Hikoki no heitai." "Hikoki," means Air Force. Now me, I didn't know how to say ordnance; I would say "Hohei." In other words, "Hohei" was the artillery; "Ho hei," or "Niushitzu," is the hospital; "Eselhe," is corpsman. Maybe a guy would come to you and he would make a motion, and you would say I'm writing home and he would say it's going to go by "Hikoki."

Now, different fellows would work in a kitchen; they would learn kitchen phrases. Then one day a fellow came in. He said, "I'll tell you what. The United States has just bombed Tokyo!" This is the way they'd say it. When we had our lunch, you could overhear the Japanese talk. They would say, "Tokyo ne youru;" last night in Tokyo. "Youru" means last night. "Toxon Hikoki B Ni Ju Gu," American aircraft B-29. We never had a B-29. So we didn't know what a B-29 was. They would say, "Takai," it would fly high. High is "Takai." "Toxon Hi," is a lot of fire. We knew they were burning Tokyo. Finally they would say,

"Senso [war battle], Okinawa, Okinawa." We never heard Okinawa before. Between you and me, the United States Government, before the war, never taught their soldiers your next geographical area. We were in the Philippines. We didn't care what was next to us. We didn't think it was ever going to happen, and here these islands were close up and we didn't know anything about it. So they would catch it, and they would say, "Okinawa" and "senso" was war. "Toxon senso," there's a lot of war. If a guy would pick up a word here and then bring it back, in a month or so you know there's an island somewhere in a place called Okinawa. And you can tell because every once in a while they would get rough with us.

Finally, we saw the first B-29, and one day was a real hot day, and we met these fellows from Britain. Now they had been in the war longer than us and they had a little more experience. This one particular day, they came in--our aircraft--and it was a nice warm day, and they were dropping their stuff, and of course, we were from a distance, and this one British man told me, "Sarge, this whole town is going to burn up." "How do you figure?" I said, I don't see anything." "You see that smoke? Watch that smoke," he said. "It goes up, it will create its own vacuum just like somebody turned the damper." Because their houses were some kind of pre-fab, and boy, as soon as that smoke got up in the sky, bam, that whole town went up just within a few minutes.

So finally, the guys recognized the B-24s and finally the fellows recognized the P-38s. And they would say to us, "Sergeant, that's a land base plane. Our troops are close." So finally only one aircraft would come over. When a large number of aircraft would come over, they would put us in air raid shelters, so they could have control over us. When one aircraft would come over, they wouldn't bother. What it was actually, they were getting ready to throw the atomic bomb.

Every once in awhile, somebody would find an American printed newspaper and say Roosevelt died, or the secretary of war died; I forget, I think a fellow from Chicago, he owned the big Chicago newspaper. He was a Republican; he was the secretary of war for Roosevelt. He owned that Chicago Tribune. McCormick, I think was his name. I'm not sure. Anyhow, I



almost lost my life there because the Japanese mentioned it to me and I told him, I slipped and told him. (laughter) Oh, God! Then we had fellows that could read Japanese character. A fellow is there awhile, and then somebody would learn a little bit here, a little bit there, and you pick up language. Of course, one thing about the Japanese. They would say, "Senso ju nen." They'd say, "The war is going to last ten years, and we're going to win." Finally it got going and going and finally it was going to be a hundred years and they were going to win.

Let me give you an illustration about how they thought they were going to win the war. These soldiers believe their propaganda. So we're in this prison camp and we had a fellow named Paul Davis. And Paul Davis was the kind of guy, I'll tell you, he came from Phillipsburg, New Jersey. I'd seen him about fifteen, twenty years ago when he was back here in the States. Anyhow, Paul Davis was always happy-go-lucky, always singing, and boy, he was the best thief in the world. So one day we were on a detail, and they said, "Yon hiaku ju go! Number 415, come here! We thought they caught him stealing. So that day when we came back, Paul Davis had two or three rations of rice, his clothes were clean, hadn't done any work.

"What happened, Paul?" "Well," he said, "One day I was on a work detail and this Japanese soldier asked what I did." He said, "I told him I was a gangster." He looked in the book, it said, "gangu", and he told the sergeant and the sergeant told the lieutenant, and the owner of this factory called Paul Davis up. He had gone to school in the United States, by the way, the owner. His name was Baron Mitzui, or something. He was a Baron; I'm pretty sure his last name was Mitzui. Anyhow, Paul Davis--one day he would tell them that he had robbed a bank, and one day he'd tell them he was on a horse; one day he was on a motor boat; just kept doing this all the time. This is Paul Davis pantomiming being a bank robber, and boy, they used to eat it up. He would say, "Watash ichi ban gangu." I'm the number one gangster. He couldn't say fifty. "Gingko," that's the bank. "Minna san te ageru!"--everybody, raise your hands! "Toxon okane," and he would take the money and he would go out and get on a horse and fire at these

units of the police. He would do this every day. He was the only one that they wanted because they used to use him to tell about his exploits. He was a young man, never been anywhere, outside of Phillipsburg. (laughter) Actually he heard it on radio and seen the movie. One day he runs into a guard and this guard believed the Japanese were going to win the war. So Paul Davis is walking by him and this guard says: "Yon hiaku ju go tomarei!"--Number 415, stop! "Tomarei" means halt. And he started asking him in Japanese, "American karito nan shigoto deska," when you go back to the United States, what kind of work are you going to do? Paul Davis says, "Watash ichi ban gangu."

"No, no, no. You don't want to go to gangu. You work hard like a Japanese." Paul said, "No, no, no. Gangu." Finally this fellow pulled this rifle up and he never put the ammunition in, and he ran the bolt in and ran a round in the chamber. And he says, "America karito nan shigoto deska." He says, "Konai shigoto,"--mine work--same as the Japanese, and the guy says, "Okay." Away he went. He was going to kill him!

Anyhow, Paul Davis was one of our guys in the camp. Of course, now one thing about him, he was always trying to find ways of getting more food and, of course, Paul would always bring stuff back for the other soldiers. But the funny thing about it was, I'm going to give one hell of a story. After the Japanese surrendered, we went to the city we were trying to get food and stuff till the airplane, Mac-Arthur came to pick us up. We did have contact with the aircraft, but they couldn't find us. They hadn't come in yet because of a lot of mines, and so forth. I'm talking about the mine fields. One day we were in this town and we see a group of Orientals and an Oriental on a horse. We got closer and found out they were Chinese. They weren't Japanese. They were prisoners the same as us. We said, "China ism watash America hetai anato no tomadachi." We're American soldiers, your friends. And they were all dressed up in white clothing and we said, "Siroi kimona doro deska," is the color white. Kimono is clothing for them. "Look at this. Where did you get that white clothing?" Well, they couldn't say store. We couldn't understand. They said, "Sorko," a big warehouse. So we'd take clothing for ourselves.

Next time we see this Japanese major, he's riding in a car. We used to call it a touring car. You call it convertible or something today. Anyhow, he comes in here and that car is just filled with Japanese money. He came in to pay his respects to our commander. Of course, he'd been there several times and then our commander says, "Olsha okane doros desu ka," where did you get the money? He says, "Wakaro yon hiaku ju go," you know the 415? He went out and robbed a bank! (laughter)

Well, we saw both the bombs, the atomic bomb; one of them was about a hundred miles away. We saw it up in the sky. We didn't know at the time. The other one at Nagasaki, I would say, in a straight line, was maybe thirty-five to fifty miles. So my officer looked at that big balloon in the sky, and he said, "What is it sergeant?" I told him, "They must have hit an oil dump." He said, "It can't be. That's been burning all day." I said, "I don't know."

So a few days later, the commanding officer--this is my picture. (Shows picture) This is my prison picture. You had your hair bald. Of course, the reason they kept you bald was on account of the lice--he said, "Why don't you raise a moustache, let your hair grow." He said, "You are an illustrious soldier of a victorious nation." Before that, we were a bunch of bums; and he left us.

So later on, citizens came in from the Red Cross and, of course, they were well-fed and talked to our commander and told us to get the people together. As soon as they could clear the mine field, they were going to come in and pick us up. And he said, President Truman. So I told the commander, "This guy is crazy. He says a fellow named Truman is President of the United States." Of course, we didn't know that our President changed vice-president about three times. We didn't know that. He also said the atomic bomb stopped the war. I said, "What is an atomic bomb?" This fellow was an officer. He said, "I don't know." (laughter) Of course, we didn't get any pay for four years. I didn't get any pay from November 30, 1941 until May of 1946. So our records were lost; they had to identify us. What else can I tell you?

BENNETT

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D: Well, that's about it.

END OF INTERVIEW