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Place of Interview: Arlington, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: Robert Taylor
(Signature)

Date: 1-16-75

Oral History Collection

Chaplain Robert Taylor

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Arlington, Texas Date: November 2, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Chaplain Robert Taylor for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on November 2, 1974, in Arlington, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Taylor in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. Chaplain Taylor was captured on the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines early in 1942 and subsequently spent the rest of the war in various Japanese prisoner-of-war camps.

Now Chaplain Taylor, to begin this interview, would you just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Chaplain Taylor: I was born in Henderson, Texas, on April 11, 1909. Shortly thereafter, two or three years thereafter, my father and mother moved to Kilgore, Texas, in a little

place called Liberty City. I grew up until I was about sixteen or seventeen years of age in what we called the Great Triangle--Kilgore-Gladewater-Longview. Right along the center of that was a little place--Liberty City. That's where I grew up. I went to school there until I was in high school.

Then I transferred along when I was about seventeen--my last years in high school--to Jacksonville Academy in Jacksonville, Texas. I took my last year of high school work and two years of college work in what we called Jacksonville College. From there I transferred to Baylor University where I graduated in 1933 with my B.A. degree. From Baylor I transferred to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in the fall of '33. In the spring of '36 I received my master of theology--what we called the Th.M. degree.

Then I was invited by Dr. Conner, head of the theology department, to come back and do graduate work toward my doctorate. This I did, and for two years I took my residence work in Southwestern Baptist Seminary for my doctorate, wrote my thesis, took my oral examination the third year, and graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in May of 1939 with my Doctor of Theology degree, which we called a Th.D. back in those days.

Now during all of those years, I was a young pastor at small half-time and fourth-time churches as a student, you see. So that brings us up to my graduation from Southwestern Seminary, at which time I had been called to the South Fort Worth Baptist Church and was pastoring in Fort Worth when I took my doctor's degree.

Marcello: When did you enter the service, and why did you enter?

Taylor: Well, that's a pretty interesting story, and the end reveals it in that I became acquainted while I was in the seminary with a young chaplain by the name of Morris E. Day. He and I were in school together, and we became close friends. Morris would go out each summer from the seminary classes and serve with the reserve forces as a chaplain, as a minister. Then in the fall, he'd return to his church and to the seminary. So I became impressed with his ministry, as he related his ministry to me.

Consequently, in the fall of 1939, after graduating from the seminary, I applied for and received a reserve commission--a commission in the reserve--Army Reserve Chaplaincy. I held that reserve commission for just about one year and was called to active duty in October 1, 1940, which is before, of course, World War II. My first

station was Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, as a first lieutenant, young chaplain, never having been in the service before.

Marcello: Now when one enters the service as a chaplain, do you enter a particular service, that is, either the Army or the Air Corps? Just how do you . . . what is the separation there?

Taylor: In those days the Air Force was part of the Army, so it was called Army Air Force. Now when I applied and received my commission, it was with the Army, of course, just like any Air Force personnel would be. My first assignment, however, was with the Air Force. I served at Barksdale until the following year when I proceeded from there. But in those days we were all the Army. But today we had three main services, you know, the Air Force, the Army, the Navy. The Air Force is the youngest of the three services.

Marcello: What were your thoughts or your reactions when you were called to active duty? Had you been more or less expecting it?

Taylor: Well, if you recall . . . and at your age I don't know how much you recall about that because you were quite a young fellow then, but the armed forces had begun to

build up. You know, the draft had gone into effect along in 1940. My first notification from the chief of Army chaplains was to the effect that we need some additional chaplains for the build-up to minister to the recruits. I went in for one year, and then I had planned to return to my church. My reaction to it all was of curiosity in some ways because I knew nothing about the military. But deep down I had a feeling that I would enjoy working with young men, troops, and it panned out that way. It was a great challenge.

Marcello: In those early days at Barksdale, what sort of activities would a chaplain have to perform? What sort of tasks would you be performing so far as these recruits were concerned?

Taylor: Well, pretty much our sole responsibility was to work as a young minister with these young troops; therefore, we had the responsibility of conducting religious services for them. But this was just the beginning. We also had the responsibility of counseling with them and encouraging them because they were all very young men coming in. You'd find loneliness among these men, and confusion and frustration. So these are the sort of things that we encountered as pastors in the military. It was very much like a pastor does in his church, but concentrated with this great group of young men who were away from home. Then, of course, we

had our religious education programs. Then, in addition to this, we, as chaplains, were military men in that we wore uniforms, and we moved among our men and made friends with these young fellows.

It was a tremendous challenge in those days, a great need for men to feel that, "Well, back yonder I left my pastor at home, but here's a man that has an open heart and will listen and so forth." It gave him an open door within the military structure to feel that he could walk through with freedom and get assistance and get advice and get leadership from a man who wasn't in there just to see the military move but to minister the people who are in the military.

Marcello: I would assume that there was quite a readjustment that had to be made by these men. We're talking about a period in history when mobility wasn't nearly so great, and these people, probably for the most part, had never been very far from their homes before until they were suddenly drafted and thrust into the service.

Taylor: Exactly, and that within itself created a great challenge for men like chaplains and all of the officers as far as that's concerned, but particularly the chaplains in this field.

Marcello: In other words, these men were suddenly uprooted from everything they had known.

Taylor: Right, their homes, their churches, their schools, their environment, their sweethearts, and all the rest, you know. This constitutes quite a shock in some ways.

Marcello: How long did you remain in Barksdale altogether before you shipped overseas?

Taylor: Not very long. I was there from October, 1941, until April of '41. During that time, however, we began to receive Air Force cadets from Kelly Field down in Texas and the basic training schools at Laredo and other places like that. I was appointed as the cadet chaplain, which is quite a challenge, along in February or March of 1941. This I enjoyed until one day . . . incidentally, it was on my birthday, April 11. We were all sitting around a little table. Some friends had come in from the base. Some of the people had brought a birthday cake. We were enjoying birthday cake and coffee when all of a sudden a messenger came in and handed me a telegram. It was a telegram from the chief of chaplains, which indicated that I was being transferred from Barksdale Air Force Base to the Philippines.

Marcello: What was your reaction when you received this news?

Taylor: Well, here again, I guess I would have to put it like this. I hadn't been in very long, and it wasn't such a great shock to me, except for a moment I had to kind of let my mind run across the geography of the world and decide where I was going. I had never heard much about the Philippines.

Marcello: I know, at least from the standpoint of the enlisted men, many of them considered this to be pretty good duty in peacetime because that military pay, as low as it was, went a long way in the Philippines.

Taylor: Well, the Philippines was the choice assignment for the armed forces before the war because, you see, one wouldn't actually feel that Hawaii would be. Well, Hawaii's great but Hawaii's small compared to the Philippines. Out in the Philippines, a man, when it came time for his vacation, could take a boat down to the southern islands. There are over 7,000 islands in the Philippine Archipelago. Then he could go to Hong Kong or go to Shanghai, anyplace, you know. So this made it a great challenge, very interesting place before the war.

Marcello: At the particular time that you received the news that you would be going to the Philippines, how much thought did you give to the possibility of war with Japan?

Taylor: I gave no thought.

Marcello: I think at that time most eyes were still turned mainly toward Europe, were they not?

Taylor: Oh, yes. You see, we hadn't even gotten into war with Europe yet, or Japan either, of course. I think, really, that with the exceptions of the pure military people, the leadership of the military, and particularly the military people in the Philippines, there was very little thought given to perhaps fighting with the Japanese, at least in the foreseeable future.

Marcello: Now at this particular time, were you married?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: And if so were you able to take your wife and family with you to the Philippines, or was the situation such that they couldn't go?

Taylor: No, it had already progressed to the place that they could not go.

Marcello: Okay, so you received the orders, and you were on your way to the Philippines. When did you arrive, and, again, what were your duties when you got there?

Taylor: Well, we sailed from San Francisco on about the twenty-first or twenty-second of April, I believe it was. We arrived in the Philippines with a stopover in Hawaii for a couple of days. We arrived in the Philippines along about the middle or maybe the eighteenth or twentieth of May, somewhere along in there. Maybe not quite that late, but it was sometime

in May. The definite date does not stick at this moment with me.

Marcello: What sort of peculiar duties did you have when you got to the Philippines?

Taylor: Well, of course, while we were traveling over, we discussed the possibilities of our assignments and what our functions would be. Of course, from a function viewpoint we knew pretty much. It would be very much like it was here. We'd be chaplains and ministers. But there were twelve chaplains on that ship, USAT Washington. When we arrived in the Philippines, we sailed into Manila Bay at night. When we woke up in the morning, there we were anchored out in the bay a good ways from the shore. We could see the skyline of the city of Manila, which is a city of over a million people. That was a lot of people in those days for a city. About nine o'clock . . . I guess around nine o'clock or ten o'clock that norming that the boarding party came. Included in that boarding party . . . of course, they were all military. But included in that boarding party was our chief of chaplains, Chaplain Oliver, who was the senior chaplain of the Philippines. He came aboard and it was not until he arrived and had a conference with us twelve

chaplains that we knew where we would be assigned. Some were assigned with the Filipino Scouts. Some were assigned on Corregidor. Some were assigned up at Fort John Hay. Some had other places throughout the Philippines where there were troops. I was assigned at the Cuartel de Espana, which was the headquarters of the American infantry in the Philippines. Chaplain Dawson was assigned with me there. Chaplain Day, whom I mentioned awhile ago, was already over there. He was at Fort William McKinley. So we found our places right quick. Of course, under those circumstances, we were immediately assigned to our posts, and we immediately reported. Within the next day or two we were serving as chaplains.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you were assigned to the Cuartel de Espana. Where is it located with regard to Manila?

Taylor: It was within the old walled city of Manila, a short distance from Dewey Boulevard. The walled city was between Dewey Boulevard and downtown Manila. It was an old walled city that had been there many, many, many years. The British broke a hole through it one time, and the Spanish came, and, you know, the Americans finally came. It's a typical, old, Oriental city.

Marcello: And there was a military post at this particular location.

Taylor: Yes, called the Post of Manila.

Marcello: What was the particular function of this post?

Taylor: Well, the function of the post, as it was the headquarters . . . General MacArthur had his office in part of the headquarters there. Then our regiment, the 31st Infantry, the only American regiment out there, was also headquartered in the old Cuartel de Espana, quite a little ways from the headquarters where general MacArthur was, but we were always in the old walled city.

Marcello: You mentioned General MacArthur. Did you have very much contact with him during your tenure here at the Cuartel?

Taylor: Well, we saw him occasionally. Of course, I was a very young lieutenant, and I had no personal contact with him except when he would speak to our various groups sometimes. We saw him quite often as he drove from his home at Manila Hotel and about the place and in and out of his headquarters and things like that.

Marcello: What seemed to be the general attitude toward General MacArthur at this particular time?

Taylor: I think that the general attitude of the American forces over there, of course, was of very high esteem for General MacArthur. Most of us didn't know him personally and things like that. We knew of him as a great commander.

And the Filipinos loved him. Man, they loved him. The forces there had great admiration for him. Unfortunately for General MacArthur, and for all of us, the Philippine Army and the Philippine forces were not as prepared and the Philippine government was not as equipped for defense of their own island country as we all thought, you know. We, ourselves, of course, were pretty small compared with their forces. We had about 20,000 troops over there. They had about 80,000. But they didn't have the equipment, and they didn't have the training and things like that that they needed to go up against these elite, well-armed and well-equipped, well-trained military forces and naval forces of Japan.

Marcello: Again, in the case of these Filipino draftees, which is what they were for the most part, we're talking about the people who were suddenly taken from a peasant society and thrust into a situation where they were expected to handle some of the modern implements of war. It simply couldn't be done in the short amount of time that was available there for preparations.

Taylor: That's very true. Now General MacArthur had succeeded in beginning to build a great armed force over there, but at that time he hadn't had time and didn't have the equipment and so forth for the training. Now the Filipinos had one outfit that was well-trained and well-equipped. They were

the Filipino Scouts. Now the Filipino Scouts were actually U. S. Army troops.

Marcello: Strictly volunteers, were they not?

Taylor: They were volunteers, and they had been trained by the American officers and noncommissioned officers. They were excellent fighters. They fought right alongside our forces on Bataan, and if I ever heard of any wavering among them . . . well, I never did. They were just very good, very good.

Marcello: Now in the situation that you were in here in the Philippines, what particular types of problems were you as a chaplain dealing with in your relationship with the troops here? Did they differ, let's say, with the problems that you encountered at Barksdale, let us say?

Taylor: Well, to some extent, I would say. They were away from home, really away from home, about 9,000 miles or whatever it is out there. Almost halfway around the world, you know. The other thing was that many of these young troops who came to us were really young and hadn't had a great deal of training at that time. They were sent out there to be trained and to get ready to defend the country, you know.

Outside of this, we had, of course, other problems. You can take young men and remove them out of their setting--home setting--and put them, particularly, in a foreign country. They are curious. They get out into the city, and a lot of times they are taken by the local traps, you know, that are set for them and things like this. They're easily led astray. So we had some problems in that area that we had to deal with as chaplains and others.

Other than that, our ministry to these young men . . . we carried on very much like we did here in the States. We maintained a program of religion for them, and we counseled with them. We had our schools for training and things like that with them.

Marcello: What sort of cooperation was there between the chaplains of the various denominations? Let's say Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish. Was there a close coordination between the three groups, or just exactly how did it work?

Taylor: Very close. I was in the military chaplaincy twenty-seven years. I found from the beginning, with few exceptions, there was always a great degree of cooperation between the chaplains of the armed forces. Of all the ministers of the world, chaplains had the greatest opportunity to come to know each other across denominational lines because we were faced with the same problems. The same needs were

out there. Those same needs had to be met by chaplains. Sometimes a chaplain of one denomination was right up against the needs of young men of other denominations, and there was no other . . . their chaplain was not around, you see. They didn't have one. You didn't have enough to provide a chaplain for every denomination in a certain area. So we learned to minister to all of them. We learned to work together without compromise. No one ever asked another chaplain to compromise at all, but we learned that we could work together with great freedom without any compromise of what we believed or anything else. We became fellow workers, you know, in a common cause.

Marcello: Approximately how many troops were there here at the Cuartel? You would probably have to estimate that.

Taylor: I think in our regiment we were short of our full strength by a great deal. I couldn't tell you exactly how many troops we had. In those days we were not permitted to name the number of troops we had. Consequently, I never tried to remember. But out of the 20,000 troops that were over there, I imagine we had something less than 2,000 in the 31st Infantry.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, could you feel the tensions and the general tone changing and so on here at the among the troops and even among your fellow officers and this sort of thing?

Taylor: Yes, because perhaps unbeknowing to our fellow officers and military back here in the States, as time went on, even after we arrived there in May, from May right on through the summer and early fall we had our maneuvers, and we had our so-called dry runs, our practice sessions. I think that people out there, for the most part, the leadership in particular, I think they were very, very conscious of a possible encounter or invasion by the Japanese. See, we were closer to it. In spite of all of this, it came as a great surprise, really, even though we had blackouts. I remember the Army-Navy game, the last one we heard before the war. We listened to it under complete, total blackout in Manila. That was something, I suppose, people back here didn't even know--that we were having blackouts. But we did.

Marcello: From what I've read I think there were also a great many . . . oh, not necessarily a great many, but there was a substantial number of Japanese businessmen and these sorts of individuals who resided in Manila and the immediate vicinity. Was there ever much thought of these overseas Japanese being a potential threat in terms of fifth columnist activity? Was this talked about very much?

Taylor: It wasn't talked about a great deal because that was one of those things you just didn't go around talking about,

you know. But I know that our people were very conscious of that. To indicate how ready they were to react against such as that . . . of course, as soon as the war came, all of those people were rounded up and interned, all of them they could find. I think they found most of them right quick. They knew who they were and where they were. So they had to be conscious of it, you know.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less, I think, brings us up to the actual Pearl Harbor attack itself. What I want you to do at this point is to describe in as much detail as you can remember exactly what you were doing and what your reactions were when you first heard about the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor.

Taylor: Well, this is easy because this made an impression on us that none of us will ever forget, except for the fact that I was asleep. You know, Pearl Harbor came to Honolulu about one o'clock in the afternoon or something about that. Well, that was about three o'clock in the morning over in the Philippines. We were almost a day ahead of you.

Marcello: Well, Pearl Harbor would have been one o'clock in Washington and eight o'clock in Honolulu. Yes, the Pearl Harbor took place at eight o'clock in the morning at Honolulu.

Taylor: Eight o'clock in the morning Philippine time?

Marcello: No, eight o'clock in the morning our time.

Taylor: Yes, that's more like it because I was awakened. My roommate . . . one of my roommates . . . there were three or four of us officers who had quarters right there just outside the walled city. Lieutenant Earl R. Short came to my bedside and woke me about three or four o'clock in the morning and said to me . . . he called me Bob, you know. My first name's Robert. In the military I went by my first name, and we called each other by first name. He said, "Bob, you must wake up!" He said, "Pearl Harbor's been bombed!" Oh, I said, "Earl, go to sleep. You're dreaming." "No," he said, "I'm not! It's true! Pearl Harbor's been bombed!" I opened my eyes by then. He was already in his uniform.

I got up and got into my uniform, and we received our orders. We had to assmeble within, I think, an hour or an hour and a half. Within another hour and a half my entire regiment was leaving the Cuartel de Espana. We went out to our . . . our mission was to go to Nichols Air Force Base and to defend the base. We thought the Japanese would attack it and they did. That was the beginning of the war as far as we were concerned.

But Pearl Harbor had been bombed in the afternoon by one or two o'clock. It was the following night, then, the night after we had been alerted, that the Japanese actually hit Nichols Field. They hit Fort John Hay the next morning, you know, up north, and Clark Field.

Marcello: Okay, so you moved then from the Cuartel over to Nichols Field. Describe next, then, your first encounter with the Japanese here at Nichols Field. Like you say, it came very, very shortly after you moved there. Describe it in as much detail as you can remember.

Taylor: Well, I remember that late in the afternoon we had gathered about what we called the mess hall, out in the open, you know, and the men had been served. Then they immediately went to their positions. I guess it was around eight o'clock at night when we heard the alarm going off--the approaching of bombers, you know. Not many . . . I think it was only probably three or four Japanese planes that came in. One or two of them began to bomb and to strafe Nichols Field. Right close to where I was, one dive bomber came in and dived in on our radio station and hit a bullseye--just knocked it right out--which made a great impression. We thought, "Well, gee, if these guys can hit a little thing like a radio station, they're really something!"

Marcello: This brings up an interesting point, if I may interrupt here. When you thought of an individual Japanese during this period, what sort of an individual did you conjure up in your own mind? Now I assume you had not had much contact with any Japanese, that is, personal contact.

Taylor: No. No personal contact with the exception of some of the merchants there in the city and people like that. Of course, they were civilians. Well, I don't recall having any personal conjuring up to do. I just thought of them as a well-trained military pilot, you know, or pilots, who were flying in to bomb. Those first ones were crack troops. I mean, they were good pilots.

Marcello: But was this your initial thought of the Japanese? In other words, let's say, at the time of Pearl Harbor. The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. How long did you think the war was going to last?

Taylor: Oh, I see what you mean. Well, certainly we didn't think a great deal about it lasting any time at all because for some reason--and I guess it was because we didn't know better--for some reason, though, we thought of the Japanese as being just a little group of people over there on the islands and perhaps ill-equipped and not very well-trained for military. So I think that people in general felt the war would be over in a few weeks.

Marcello: But you had a rather sobering experience here at Nichols Field as you mentioned.

Taylor: Yes, that was the initial shock of the whole thing, you know. Of course, they had already hit Hawaii, Honolulu and Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: And I'm sure you didn't know really the extent of the damage that had been done there.

Taylor: No, and we didn't know for a long time because no one would dare to put that out. We listened to President Roosevelt's speech and declaration of war. But even there he didn't indicate anything and would not, of course, to what extent Pearl Harbor had been destroyed or the number of ships that had been destroyed.

Marcello: Okay, now this was obviously the first time that you personally had come under bombing or actual war itself. What sort of thoughts did you have when personally being under the bombs?

Taylor: Well, of course, it was quite frightening to all of us, really. You're a little unnerved in a situation like that. You have all of these young troops who had never been in any war before. I'd never been in a war. Any normal person has to kind of adjust to the situation like that, and you have some misgivings about it. But

as time goes on you kind of get into the swing of the thing, and you become more adjusted. But those initial stages of war were something of a shock to people.

Marcello: This leads into my next question, I think. What could you as a chaplain do during this period, that is, so far as administering to the troops? Now did your whole role kind of change a little bit?

Taylor: Not a great deal because readily you realized, or I realized, very immediately that these young men were . . . of all times they needed someone now. So this was a great help to me, that I was on the giving side. My job was to work with the men and to reassure men, not that they wouldn't be injured or even wouldn't be killed. But there's a ministry there that needs to be done, you know, people's spirits and the renewal of their faith and confidence and things like this.

For example, the second or third day of the war I was in Manila. This was after the initial stages, but the war was still new. The Japanese bombers came overhead to bomb Cavite and Corregidor, and all pandemonium broke loose in the city. You see, they hadn't come under the real shock until now. But when the bombs began to drop in the walled city and across the bay there at Cavite, the whole population of the city was spectators, and the city

was in great pandemonium. But I went back to my troops that evening as they assembled, and I could sense the same sort of feeling, you know, among troops and in the initial stages of war. It was my duty as a chaplain to bolster their faith and their confidence. This is what I did, you know.

Marcello: Under these circumstances--and we'll certainly talk more about this later on--do men suddenly become more religious?

Taylor: Not necessarily, no. I saw many men turn for the first time to a positive faith and belief and such as that, but I never saw one that I felt did it out of fear or because he had been caught in a trap. But it always seemed to be something that came smoothly and naturally from the need of a person. I will say this, that I think trouble, war, tension, imprisonment always brings to bear upon the individual a sobering thought of his great need that he'd never felt before, you see. In our cases later on as prisoners-of-war, men had a lot of time to think about these things.

Marcello: How long were you at Nichols Field altogether before you eventually moved out of there?

Taylor: Very short time. You see, we knew the strategy, and the military out there had planned this a long time before. The leaders had reason to believe with the smallness of

our force there and the untrained condition of the Filipinos that if the Japanese threw against us their weight, should they throw their entire weight against us or the strength of a well-trained army and navy, that we'd very likely not be able to defend the whole island of Luzon. So the plan was to withdraw to Corregidor.

Marcello: This was War Plan Orange, I think it was called.

Taylor: Right. And even in the early days there had been some storage of equipment and materials and maybe foodstuff out there. So we immediately . . . I'd say within three or four or five days we were moving. This happened on the eighth day of December. On Christmas Day, which is about a week or ten days later, two weeks later at the most, I was at Abucay Hacienda. That's across the Lyac Junction over into the Bataan Peninsula, and the troops were just bumper to bumper, truck to truck, going into Bataan, and had been for days.

Marcello: Now isn't it true that the idea of going down into Bataan was to hold out until the troops could be evacuated by the Navy, which was supposed to be coming?

Taylor: Well, or . . .

Marcello: Or reinforced.

Taylor: Or reinforced. Actually, I don't remember us ever even discussing being evacuated. That wasn't on our minds. But we did think, and naively so, for some time that help was on the way and that we would receive reinforcements and renewal and replenishing of our supplies and equipment. Of course, Pearl Harbor took care of a lot of that. I guess the leaders knew better, but those of us who were younger in this business always looked forward to the coming of the Americans.

Marcello: Help was coming the next day or the next week.

Taylor: Yes, and that word got around. Now, you know, rumors will fly.

Marcello: I'll bet the Bataan Peninsula was one big rumor mill during that entire period.

Taylor: (Laughter) You're not kidding.

Marcello: What were some of the more bizarre rumors that you heard? Can you think of any?

Taylor: Well, yes. Later on, after we'd been there awhile and the food supply became low, then the rumors would come in every once in awhile about a bunch of ships being sighted south of Corregidor, bearing foodstuffs and ammunition and warplanes and things like that. All kinds of rumors like that. Then we had rumors about the surrender, you know,

that the Japanese had given up, a time or two. A few things like that. Shear rumors without any foundation whatsoever.

Marcello: When you moved back into the Bataan Peninsula, where exactly were you located with regard to the front lines? Now, of course, the front lines, obviously, were shifting and changing as the full weight of the Japanese was being brought to bear upon the troops down in that Peninsula.

Taylor: Yes, let's put it like this. If you know the geography, we traveled from Manila, north to San Fernando, Pampanga, which is in the valley. Then from Pampanga we veered west to Lyac Junction. You can find it on your map. There is where the road--the main road, the highway--crossed the river into Bataan, and from there, south, was the Bataan Peninsula. Well, when we crossed Lyac Junction, our first stop was at Abucay Hacienda which is a few miles down the road inside Bataan Peninsula. We could hear it in the daytime, and at night we could see the flash of artillery way up toward Lingayen Gulf. The Japanese had already landed or they were in the process of landing and they'd moved on down.

Marcello: If they came in through Lingayen Gulf, and I think there's a relatively level stretch of land in there, a plain, and they just shot right down through there.

Taylor: Right on down into the big valley. Yes, it's level. My first station when we first went to Bataan . . . our first station was along what we called Biak Trail, which led from Manila Bay up toward Mount Sumat. We were there a few days in preparation of our lines of defense there.

But we then received orders to move in for battle position at Abucay Hacienda. There was a town of Abucay and then the Spanish hacienda, a big farm and house just west of us. We went in there and that's where we had our first encounter with the Japanese--my regiment.

Marcello: Can you describe this particular encounter?

Taylor: Well, yes. We moved into place and prepared our defense positions. We knew the Japanese were coming down. Even though we'd had a little skirmish with them, very little, we moved back, and then we moved back up to Abucay. Here's where we made a very good stand. We were there several days.

Marcello: This was known as the Abucay Line, was it not?

Taylor: That's right, the Abucay Line. Our regiment along with the Filipino Scouts and others were in the defense of this place for the several days we were there. Here again, by this time we had become pretty much acclimated,

and we knew what it was all about and so forth. By this time I had buried a few troops who had been killed, both enemy and ours. I remember, though, moving up and down the line along the hacienda ridge west of Abucay on the west end of the line with our troops and having to be very careful because there were machine gun fire and snipers. You had to be careful moving around because these snipers were all in the trees, you know. A lot of them were.

This was a terrific battle. We held them there several days. Then they brought in new reinforcements, and we then strategically pulled back. This was at Abucay. Then we went back into what we called bivouac for a few days, and the battle slackened off after a time. There was a lull in the battle there because we had held the ground pretty much, and the Japanese apparently had run out of supplies and equipment, and they had to wait for reinforcements. So the next real battles we got into were a little later, farther south, about halfway from Abucay to the point, down close to Corregidor.

Then when that line crumbled with new enforcements from the Japanese and the tremendous air power and everything, which we didn't have . . . and by this time our troops were sick and weak, and our ammunition had run out.

It was a lost cause pretty much. But they did hold on and move back, hold on and move back, hold on and move back, until finally we surrendered on the ninth day of April, 1942, down at Mariveles, just south of there. It's right on the point almost.

Marcello: Let's just go back here a minute. How closely during this period of time would you as a chaplain work with the medics?

Taylor: Very closely. For example, Dr. Clarence H. White, a very fine physician, was the regimental doctor, and I was a regimental chaplain. I was issued a truck with two Filipino drivers and maybe a third man to help us. In my ministry to our men along the lines, I had this truck that we could use to help evacuate wounded men and get them back to the . . . they had some ambulances, but not a great many. We worked very closely with the medics in this sort of thing, you know, to get men out who were wounded. Dr. White and I worked all through the four months together until later on when some doctor replaced him. Then he and I worked together. I have his name right now, Dr. Rader. Rader was his name. So we did work very close, and I remember on the night before the surrender I assisted the doctor because everything had broken loose and troops were moving back, so I assisted

the doctor in evacuating, I expect, fifteen or twenty men back to the hospital that very night. So we did work very closely together.

Marcello: Obviously, as you mentioned awhile ago, one of your tasks would also be officiating over the burial of the dead and this sort of thing. What sort of a service would you be able to perform under these wartime conditions?

Taylor: Well, there were only two or three occasions where we actually buried people out there on the battlefield. We didn't do that. We evacuated their bodies if we could recover them. They were sent back, and we had graves registration chaplains back there who had the responsibility of burying these people and getting their names and markers and so forth.

But I remember one time we had some bombers coming overhead, and one or two Filipinos who had kind of turned informers, some of their buddies had killed them, you know. I buried those people in a lot right by their house. They had this funeral. Then I had a funeral or two on the ship later on, people who died and we buried them at sea. But back in Bataan we got, I think, just about all of our people except those who

were killed beyond the line or in no man's land that we were never able to get. But in answer to your question, a service like that would be very short, more of a commital service, because you didn't have much time to do things like that on the battlefield.

Marcello: I have a few more general questions with regard to your experiences here on the Bataan Peninsula before the surrender, and I'd like you to comment on these questions. As time goes on, of course, food becomes a problem. How great a problem did this become, and what steps were taken to counter the lack of an adequate food supply?

Taylor: You mean on Bataan?

Marcello: On Bataan, right, before the surrender.

Taylor: Well, in the first place, it did become quite acute--the need of food--and the shortage was very, very great. We got to the place to where we had only one meal a day, once every twenty-four hours, something like that. Then it even got down to where that was a very small amount. Men would scrounge in the woods if they could between battles and things like that to gather what they could. Now there wasn't very much food out at Bataan. If we'd been in an area in the coconut country, it would have been a little different, or banana groves and things like . . . we had a few bananas out there but not many.

So the food situation did become quite acute. People who were responsible for feeding the troops certainly made contact with any of the Filipinos who had these little banana groves and things like this, or had any rice that they could spare, and brought it in. But to feed an army like that, you just couldn't do it. So actually what happened, we just went until we just used up our food--just about all of it--and ammunition and supplies were just about all gone.

Marcello: Isn't it also true that the Japanese actually herded or pushed a great many Filipino civilians down into that Bataan Peninsula to make the food situation even more acute? Are you familiar with this activity?

Taylor: No, no, I never heard of this because, you see, once we were in Bataan . . . the Filipinos who were down there ahead of us, now, back on those banana groves and out in there, some of them, I guess, snuck out through the mountains and got out of there. But they were the only ones that I knew. I don't think the Japanese had any opportunity to do that. I won't say it didn't happen, but I don't see how it could have happened, really. They'd have had to force the Filipinos to going in there, you know.

But we lived pretty much . . . we survived pretty much on the food that we had and that was carried in with

us and was already out there--rice and such as that. These foragers may have also been able to have snuck in a little rice by barge and so forth across Manila Bay at night. But I don't think the Filipinos came in to deplete our food supply. The military had great protection over it, and that would not have happened.

Marcello: Okay, while these troops were here on Bataan, there were, of course, other American troops on the island of Corregidor. I gather that from time to time there was a certain amount of resentment here. For some reason--I guess it was more envy than anything else--because Corregidor seemend to be a relatively safe and secure place as compared to Bataan. Did you ever hear any talk along these lines?

Taylor: I don't remember ever hearing any troops on Bataan wishing they were over on Corregidor. There may have been a few. But I don't know. I got the impression that most of the troops on Bataan were actually kind of glad they were on Bataan instead of Corregidor, maybe with a few exceptions, because until the thing really broke right there at the last, we had just about as much security as they did. Of course, troops on Corregidor had to be out there on those beaches and things like that, so they didn't have the protection that, say, the

medics and the patients in the hospital and the administrative people had within Malinta Tunnel.

Marcello: Now during this period, especially when one gets closer to the fall of the Batann Peninsula itself, General MacArthur, of course, evacuates. He leaves by PT boat for Australia. What effect did General MacArthur's departure have upon the morale of the troops?

Taylor: I don't think it had a great deal of effect. It had some. I'd have to say that, I think. I think the reason it didn't have too much effect on us in Bataan . . . now I don't know what effect it had to the people of Corregidor itself and the headquarters, so I can't speak for them, but for the troops on Bataan we had General Wainwright as our great commander of the Philippine Army, you know. We served . . . not the Philippine Army, the Philippine Division. Our regiment was a part of that, and the other three or four regiments of Scouts were part of that.

Marcello: So you had the Philippine Army, the Philippine Division, and the Filipino Scouts.

Taylor: Yes, right. The Filipino Scouts were part of the Philippine Army.

Marcello: The American Army.

Taylor: The American . . . no . . . yes. It was a part of the Philippine Division. But anyway, all troops--and we had

a lot of Philippine Army troops over there, too, you know--but all of us thought a lot of Wainwright. He was a soldier to the "Nth" degree. He was right there with his troops and leading and directing and commanding the Philippine Division. When he left Bataan, I think the big letdown was that we had lost a great commander over there. But the thing that compensated for it was that we knew that he was going as the commander to take MacArthur's place. This was something to encourage us a great deal, we thought. Even though MacArthur was gone, we still had a great commander.

Marcello: I know from time to time some of the troops of Bataan more or less derisively referred to MacArthur as "Dugout Doug." I don't know if you heard this term floating around.

Taylor: Oh, yes, yes. That went around, and, of course, I think in any situation you'll have remarks about the old man, you know, particularly in the set-up . . . I recall that when the newspapers at the beginning of the war came out with this big front line story about "MacArthur Takes to the Field!" And where did he go? He went to Corregidor, you know, Malinta Tunnel. So the troops had a lot of laughter about that, you know. But the man that we really looked up to on Bataan was Wainwright.

Marcello: Well, apparently, MacArthur did not make too many visits to Bataan after the actual fighting had started.

Taylor: One visit that I know of.

Marcello: This, of course, would be a personal opinion on your part if you choose to answer it. But do you think his presence there more often might have been of some help so far as morale and this sort of thing was concerned?

Taylor: I think it would have been a great help, great help. But I cannot criticize or state any opposition to his decision not to come because I don't know, you see, and we didn't know. But we do know that there was quite a lull in the battle there for a good while, and if he could have come over and joined Wrinwright and others and moved around among the troops, it would have been great morale boost for us, you know.

Marcello: Okay, so . . .

Taylor: Why he didn't, I don't know. Maybe he had orders not to fool around over there much. I don't know.

Marcello: Okay, so in early April the American forces on the Bataan Peninsula surrendered.

Taylor: The 9th of April.

Marcello: The 9th of April. And, of course, the Bataan death march began shortly thereafter. Now at this point then, describe

what you were doing and where you were when you heard about the surrender, the news of the surrender, and your reactions to it.

Taylor: Well, it wasn't so much hearing about the surrender as it was seeing the white flags go up, which is a symbol of surrender. I told you awhile ago that the night of the surrender, or the night prior to the surrender in the morning, we had pulled back from the final battle, I assisted Dr. Rader with getting quite a few patients--wounded people--back to the hospital. This is some time before daylight. I don't know just how long it was. Then, immediately after, oh, I guess around nine or ten o'clock in the morning the white flags started up everywhere. Of course, all during this night the troops kept coming back, coming back. About nine o'clock in the morning the surrender flags went up, and, of course, we got word that General King had been ordered to surrender and that he had sent his contact people forward to contact the Japanese leaders and affect the surrender. This was rather a sad moment in the lives of all of us because you just can't imagine what the feeling is unless you've been there to see the white flag hoisted and the American flag lowered in defeat. This is something we had never expected and never witnessed . . .

Marcello: And probably were not prepared for.

Taylor: . . . and never experienced. And not prepared for it at all, no. So this was somewhat of a shock. The next thing was to see all of these white flags flying which symbolized surrender. This was degrading and rather suffocating to all of us in feeling and spirit. Then the next thing we realized, here come the Japanese tanks down the road firing their guns once in awhile, passing the various units, and people were dropping off to take command and to take over. Then the first night a whole battalion of the Japanese pitched camp right close to where we were and close to the hospital area.

Marcello: Was this your first contact with the Japanese troops?

Taylor: First contact, yes, except for some prisoners-of-war whom we had seen a time or two. Well, the Japanese came in, and, of course, these commanders were usually pretty polite. I recall being at this hospital. I believe it was Number Two. There were some of the Japanese prisoners-of-war there. The hospital commander got these fellows, and they went with him down to meet the first Japanese tank which came along just as far as here to that street from the entrance of the hospital, I guess. The Japanese leaders were very nice in many instances.

They didn't seem to be hostile or want to perpetrate any murders or executions or anything like that. But, of

course, their mission was to go on to Corregidor. I can remember that very night when they assembled. They had their assembly there, and they were getting pep talks from their commander and so forth. You could understand that they were talking about Corregidor. We had fallen and Corregidor was next. Of course, then the next day following the surrender, the death march began.

Marcello: Now up until this time, you had not been molested or looted or harassed in any way by the Japanese troops themselves?

Taylor: No, no, they hadn't had any access to us until the surrender came. Actually, the first access they had to, I suppose, various groups of Americans across Bataan would have been when they came upon a battalion or part of a battalion. See, by this time they were pretty well scattered, and everybody had kind of moved back. It wasn't an orderly move back in every case. Some cases it was, depending on the situation. The Japanese were bombing and they were strafing and they were shelling with artillery. So the commanders had their troops to scatter and to move back with as much safety as possible. Therefore, they couldn't just march back, you know, like they would have loved to have done. But they couldn't.

Marcello: Did they more or less congregate all of the officers together?

Taylor: Not at first, no. They were just all thrown together pretty much wherever they found them.

Marcello: Did the Japanese seem to know what they were doing? Or did you get the impression that they perhaps were overwhelmed at the tremendous number of prisoners that they suddenly found thrust upon them?

Taylor: I expect the local leadership among the Japanese were quite surprised to find as many troops out there--Filipinos and . . . mostly Filipinos.

Marcello: I've read on several occasions that the Japanese were virtually overwhelmed by the number of troops that they found there. As a result, there was a breakdown in logistics, among other things. They simply weren't prepared to handle this many troops that had surrendered.

Taylor: Well, not only were . . . maybe not only was that true, but they made no effort . . . we had hundreds of men in the hospitals there who were crippled and wounded. They permitted those men . . . ordered them all who could walk to get on the death march. The only people they ever picked up, I suppose, along the way--and I can't say that they ever picked any up--but they may have picked up a few who became exhausted and fell on the death march. But the most of them were bayoneted or shot.

The Japanese didn't make any effort to organize or to evacuate us out of there by trucks. I think they could have done that. You see, all these trucks which had been utilized and used to bring in recruitments, reinforcements of equipment and manpower and everything else, could have been concentrated on evacuating these prisoners-of-war. But they didn't do that. Their main thrust was to get these prisoners-of-war out of the way if they could, so they could go on to Corregidor. So they ordered them to march--the crippled, one-legged, peg-legged, sick, wounded. So the death march took only God knows how many lives.

I'll always feel and know that the Japanese at this point broke down in a great responsibility to innocent prisoners-of-war. They could have at least come in with their trucks and said to those who were crippled, those who were sick, "We'll pick you up and take you out." But they didn't do that. They threw them all on the death march. This is a thing they had to account for later, of course. But at the time they . . . apparently, the local leadership didn't look very far ahead.

Marcello: Okay, so the death march begins on April 9, 1942. I assume that you started from Mariveles. Is that correct?

Taylor: Yes. I didn't do the whole death march. I did a part of it, and Chaplain Oliver, the senior chaplain, had me to drop off the death march and join Hospital Number One, which is right across from Corregidor. So I wasn't on that part of the death march very far. But then I marched through the streets of Manila with my group later, then from Manila to Cabanatuan, and then we marched out to the prison camp from up there.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about that leg of the death march that you were on. Let's talk first of all about the assembly. Obviously, hordes of troops were being assembled here at Mariveles.

Taylor: Well, it wasn't exactly like that. Those who were at Mariveles were assembled on the road. It wasn't so much an assembly as it was that they received orders just to hit the road and start walking. The Japanese soldiers would fall in. Of course, they were, I guess, organized a little better to do it. These stragglers were coming in from the jungles all along, or units or battalions. Wherever the Japanese encountered them, they just ordered them to get in the road and start marching north. That's the way it happened. It wasn't that all the troops of Bataan were assembled at Mariveles and then the Japanese came in and organized us into a marching group. It wasn't that way at all. It happened in a rather unorganized

fashion. Wherever the troops were, that's where they hit the road and started marching, you know, north.

Marcello: Okay, so describe your particular odyssey on the Bataan death march.

Taylor: I was taken prisoner along with the rest of the prisoners just south of Mariveles at old Hospital Number Two up on the hill just south, looking across toward Corregidor. The march from there, of course, went east to Cabcaben and around. I went part of the way down to Cabcaben, and along the way . . . this was early in the early stages of the Bataan death march. There were not many casualties at the very beginning, see. Consequently, I did not encounter many of the great casualties. I was in that phase of the death march that was forming from the west of Mount Mariveles all around the south, all the way around to Cabcaben, and then a short distance north. This was in the formative part of it, the formation of it. This was all the death march that I saw.

Now from the time they left Cabcaben area, going north, was when the going got rough. The hordes of people . . . you can imagine 80,000 Filipinos with perhaps 10,000 Americans, those who were in the march, going north. It was hot and humid, and they had no food to eat. They had no water to drink even though there

were springs of water along the way that the Japanese wouldn't permit the men to leave the line of march to get water. This was the thing that mead the death march really a horrible set-up.

I saw the formation of the death march and only a few miles of it from Hospital Number Two down to Hospital Number One, which is on the north side of Cabcaben there, and Corregidor. This was more or less the beginnings of the death march.

Marcello: Did you personally witness any of the brutality or atrocities in this area where you were?

Taylor: No. As I say, this was the beginning. There were some, I know. The Japanese were very rough when maybe the man didn't move out as fast as they should. But I did not see any of that in the beginning. Now this happened along the way.

Marcello: And I gather that you still had not been looted or anything of this nature. You still had some personal belongings--rings and watches and that sort of thing.

Taylor: Right, now when I lost my . . . I remember losing my watch. This was while Corregidor was being bombed and being attacked. I was ministering as a chaplain. I was serving as a chaplain in Hospital Number One. Chaplain Dawson and I one day went out through the woods. Keep in mind now

that we didn't have any guards yet around us. We went out into the woods to the old headquarters . . . of our old headquarters just rumaging around to see what we could find. We thought maybe we might find some rice or something, you know. A little Japanese who was out there hunting monkeys . . . he'd killed him a monkey. You know, they ate monkeys as food. They needed food, too, you know. A little Japanese came up on us, and he saw my watch. I had a watch in my pocket. You know, back in those days we wore watches in our pocket. He saw that chain and wanted my watch, and I just handed it to him. He went his way, thanked me and went his way. He could have killed me, you know, or taken it if I hadn't have given it to him. Oh, he may not. He was a youngster--young Japanese soldier. But the looting and all of that, the men lost a great deal of that as they started out on this long march. The Japanese looted it from them and took everything they had except about what they wore. Maybe their canteens they carried and things like that.

Marcello: Okay, so what happened to you personally at this point after you were separated from the people who actually proceeded on the death march?

Taylor: I was assigned by Chaplain Oliver to minister in this hospital. He got permission from the Japanese for me to do this.

Marcello: Did the Japanese seem to have a great deal of . . . I don't think respect is a good word to use, but did they recognize you as a chaplain and that you had certain functions peculiar to a chaplain and this sort of thing?

Taylor: At first, they seemed not to want to recognize chaplains as non-combatants. But then later on they did, and they recognized us. They didn't give Chaplain Oliver any static about assigning a couple or three of us chaplains to this hospital group that was going to have to remain here. I was assigned to this hospital, and for one month--from about the 10th or 11th of April until the 7th or 8th of May when Corregidor fell, and these dates may not be exact, but they're pretty close--I served as a chaplain in Hospital Number One, and I ministered there to patients. We were under fire most of the time from Corregidor during this time. There was Chaplain William Dawson and myself, Protestant chaplains, and Chaplain Talbot, Catholic chaplain. He was the Catholic chaplain at this hospital, and we were the Protestant chaplains. I remember soon after we got to this hospital and were here while the Japanese were fighting Corregidor, the commanding general and his staff came down the road one day, and here we were out here holding an evening vesper service. I guess the old

man thought we were getting together for something. He didn't know what--maybe recruiting. So he stopped with his staff, and they came out to see what we were doing. The interpreter asked me, "What are you doing?" I said, "We are conducting a religious service." He spoke a word or two to the Japanese general and then turned and said in perfect English, because the guy had been educated in this country, he said, "Very well. It's the wish of the Japanese general that you continue your service," and they turned around and walked away, you see. It was some time later on after that that we actually received some guards to watch over us.

Marcello: But even so, during this month or however long it was here in Hospital One, the Japanese really didn't harass you at all. They allowed you to go about your normal pastoral duties.

Taylor: Right. In the hospital area they never bothered us. They never questioned us. They just looked on us all as prisoners-of-war.

Marcello: And generally speaking, did they not harass any of the other wounded people there, also?

Taylor: No, no. They didn't necessarily harass us. They kind of ignored us, except they used us. They placed their guns all around the hospital--the artillery to bomb and to shell

Corregidor and Fort Drum. But they didn't necessarily harass us.

One little interesting thing happened. We had a lady in that group. She was caught up somehow as one of the missionary's wives or something. I never did know really why she was out there, but she was caught somehow in Bataan. She was in this hospital. To protect her from these Japanese soldiers, you know, who would wander through, they cut her hair just like a man's hair and dressed her up like a man to protect her, the doctors did. That way they got her through alright.

Marcello: Now at this time at this Hospital Number One, was there an adequate amount of food and medicine and other supplies to take care of the wounded who were there?

Taylor: Well, I wouldn't say adequate because the American forces had depleted their medical set-up pretty much. They did have some medicines. The doctors there were still organized to take care of the patients the best they could. But there wasn't a great deal of medicine to be had.

Marcello: And the Japanese, I assume, did not supply anything for the hospital.

Taylor: No, because we were temporary. We were going to be there only as long as Corregidor stood, and then we would be

evacuated. Now this is the first time that the Japanese . . . when we were evacuated from this hospital after Corregidor fell, they did bring in trucks and transported these patients and those of us who were chaplains and doctors into Bilibid Prison Camp. But they didn't do it for the big group, which they could have done, I think, for at least the wounded and the crippled or sick.

Marcello: Okay, I think we might as well go into this next particular phase of your tenure as a prisoner-of-war. This would, of course, be the trip from Hospital Number One to Bilibid. Why don't you describe this trip and then talk just a little bit about what Bilibid Prison was like and the conditions that you found there. I guess in the meantime we'll have to speak about your march down Dewey Boulevard, also, and the significance of that. Let's start with the evacuation first of all from the hospital.

Taylor: When the hospital . . . and keep in mind that we were not yet guarded by soldiers, by Japanese people. We were just there, and the Japanese depended on the doctors and the leadership to kind of keep us together and everything. They knew where we were. When they evacuated our patients, at first the staff moved back up to Hospital Number Two waiting for transportation. They took the patients first.

We were up there just three or four or five days. Then trucks came in--Japanese trucks--and they took us aboard, and we went into Bilibid Prison Camp in the old walled city.

Here again are where your rumors came in. Rumors began to fly. I remember when we went north on those trucks, along the way the Japanese stopped and permitted us to buy some mangos. Well, we came to the forks of the road--one road leading on north toward San Fernando, La Union, and the other leading back toward San Fernando, Pampanga--we turned back toward Pampanga and Manila. The rumors started flowing around that we were going to be repatriated, you know, and all like this. But when we got to Manila, they drove up in front of the gates of the old Bilibid Prison.

We were imprisoned there for several weeks. I've forgotten just how long. It wasn't long, though--two or three weeks, I think. We were in Bilibid Prison. This old Spanish prison had been there for centuries, and there were those walls--gloomy, dismal. Inside were, oh, several hundred prisoners--American prisoners. This was quite an experience, you know. This was really our first imprisonment even though we had surrendered a month before. For those who stayed behind in Bataan, this was our first imprisonment. It was quite a horrible set-up, you know.

Marcello: Describe what it was like.

Taylor: Well, you can imagine being thrown into a prison where the walls are high and the Japanese guards are all around. This was a new experience for us. The food was served to us on little tin plates. It was a typical poverty-type prison experience. Very little food--just a little rice. I think we got it twice a day while I was there, and nothing more. We did have water in the prison camp.

Marcello: Of what quality was the rice that you had?

Taylor: Very poor grade. It had worms in it, and it had weevils in it, and it was not what we call a graded rice. It was just the bare brown rice, you know.

Marcello: Were you hungry enough at this time that the weevils and the worms didn't bother you?

Taylor: Oh, yes. You get to the place those sort of things don't bother you at all if you can eat rice. A lot of the men couldn't eat rice or couldn't force themselves to eat rice. I was one of those who had grown up in an East Texas farming area, and even though our food was good, I had learned to like rice. Rice tasted the same to me, except it wasn't as good a grade of rice. So I could make with it, you know. It took a lot of courage. I was a little older than some of the troops, too. A lot of these youngsters--seventeen to twenty-year-old--out of New York,

Chicago, San Francisco, someplace, they'd never gone through anything like this. Neither had I, but at least I was . . . I think I was seasoned, when it came to the eating, a little better then they were.

Marcello: This brings up an interesting point. I've heard it said by some of the former prisoners-of-war that I've interviewed that the older men in many cases handled the situation much better than did the younger men and that the survival rate in many cases among the older men was better than among the younger men. It may be in terms of what you were talking about here.

Taylor: Right. The young men could not take the shock of this thing like the older men. A good example was the fact that we had quite a few older men who were civilians. We called them "beachcombers." They'd been out there in the Philippines for years. I don't think we lost a single one of them for months and months and months. These young men died like flies at O'Donnell and Cabanatuan. We buried them 500 a day at O'Donnell--the chaplains did. At Cabanatuan we buried as many as 100 or more a day. For the most part they were young fellows--these young fellows--who couldn't force themselves to eat, and they had contracted malaria and, of course, dysentery and pellagra and everything else, you know. They just couldn't take it.

Marcello: What sort of a routine did you have here in Bilibid? I know that it was simply a temporary station along the way--a transit station. What did you do while you were here at Bilibid?

Taylor: We didn't do very much of anything at Bilibid because this was kind of a relay station for the most of us. Now later, this came to be the permanent sort of prison camp for the Navy.

Marcello: It later became a hospital camp.

Taylor: Hospital camp, yes. They had a well-organized camp there later on. But when we went through there, it was kind of, again, in a formative stage. We were kind of being relayed through there. It was a relay station. When we left there, we were marched out of there as prisoners-of-war.

This was when we were marched across Quezon Bridge down to Dewey Boulevard and down across Dewey Boulevard to one of the piers. I think it was pier seven. No, I beg your pardon. We were marched from Dewey Boulevard to the railroad station. It was later on that we marched to the . . . you know, we were brought back to Bilibid in about September or October of '44. But this particular time, we were marched out of Bilibid down to the big railroad station. They put us on boxcars like cattle. Then we went on the rails up to Cabanatuan and camped at

Cabanatuan over one night, maybe two nights. Then we marched physically and bodily from there to Cabanatuan Prison Camp, about seven or nine miles east of the city of Cabanatuan.

Marcello: Okay, let's go back there just a minute. How long were you at Bilibid altogether?

Taylor: Well, I was there about two weeks, I think, at first. Then when we came back to Bilibid in October . . . I believe it was October. I'm sure it was--October of '44. We were there from October until December 13th. We marched out again down to . . . across Quezon Bridge down to the pier seven where we boarded a Japanese Oryokou Maru.

Marcello: Incidentally, while you were here at Bilibid the first time, what sort of quarters did you have? Were you put in individual cells that were there at Bilibid?

Taylor: No, these were big dormitory-like buildings. Over at the back of this big prison camp was a hugh building. I think it was built for a hospital. When I came back there in October, that's where we were housed. But the first time I was in Bilibid, we were housed in these ground-floor, open shotgun-type of buildings. We all slept right along on the ground with maybe a little rice pad or something under us.

Marcello: Now while you were at Bilibid this first time, did the Japanese guards more or less leave you alone, or did the harassment begin at this point?

Taylor: Well, there was not a great deal of harassment while we were in the prison camp itself the first time there. I don't recall any instances when the individuals were harassed. This first two weeks was more or less a harassment of the whole camp by cutting our food down to nothing, and by keeping a close guard on the fences and things like that. They were interrogating people. They didn't call me out, but some of the leaders of our military were being interrogated over at Fort Santiago and places like that in the walled city. This was the sort of thing that was going on in those days.

Marcello: Okay, so you were there about two weeks, and, like you mentioned, they marched you out of there, down Dewey Boulevard, and eventually to the railroad station.

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: Describe this march. Did they try and harass you and humiliate you along the way in front of the Filipino civilians?

Taylor: Well, the mere fact that they marched us out across Quezon Bridge and down right around the old walled city

where thousands of Filipinos lined up . . . the whole purpose of the thing was for the humiliation of the Americans before the people we had lived with and served with and had occupied their country as fellow citizens for many, many years. That was the extent. Now there may have been a few incidents along the way when a prisoner-of-war would wander away from the line of march a step or two, and they would strike him over the shoulders with something, you know. But beyond that, there was no personal harassment.

Marcello: Did you ever witness any of the Filipinos giving any sort of aid or comfort to the prisoners, that is, in terms of slipping them food or anything of this nature?

Taylor: No, not along this march. They wouldn't dare to. They'd have lost their lives. Now along the death march--and I imagine you've heard others who have talked--the Filipinos did follow the line of march and find people who were wounded but not dead, and they took them back to their houses and nurtured many of them back to life. Later on, the Filipinos in the city of Manila organized to bring relief and help to our prisoners.

Marcello: Okay, so they marched you to the railroad station. Now, of course, I assume you took a train ride from the railroad station to Cabanatuan. Describe this train ride and what it was like.

Taylor: Well, they herded us into these boxcars just like cattle.

Marcello: Now up until this point, I assume officers were not being treated any different than the enlisted men.

Taylor: Oh, no. No, we hadn't been organized yet. So we were all ordered into these boxcars. We stood. There was no room to sit down, and they pushed us in there until the boxcar was literally full. Then they'd open another one and got us all in there. So we rode in this boxcar all the way to Cabanatuan, which is something like seventy to eighty kilometers to the north.

Marcello: Was it a closed boxcar, or were you able to see out? Were there slats?

Taylor: It had slats, as I recall. It had a roof on it. But as I recall, it did have slats.

Marcello: What provisions were made for lavatory facilities and things of this nature while you were on this train ride?

Taylor: No provisions were made. It may have been that they had a container or something in the boxcar, so if a man had to have a bowel movement, he could do so. But nothing particular.

Marcello: What provisions so far as food were made for this trip?

Taylor: There were no provisions for food enroute. Now when we got to Cabanatuan, we were served a little rice in the evening. Then the next morning before we started our

trip out, or the second morning . . . I've forgotten how many days. I think we was there just for one night.

Marcello: In your particular railroad car, did you lose anybody, that is, did anybody die?

Taylor: No person died on this trip, as I recall. It was hot in there, and a good many of the men fainted, perhaps, temporarily because of the exhaustion and heat. But they soon were revived and lived through it.

Marcello: Incidentally, what sort of equipment and personal belongings did the Japanese allow you to maintain at this time?

Taylor: You had no equipment except maybe some of the fellows still had their mess kits, and they had what they had on their bodies, and that was it. For the most part, men were able to hold onto their New Testament or their Prayer Book or something like this that they carried . . . anything they could carry on their body. But by this time, those that had watches and things like had lost most of them. A Japanese soldier would come along and want it. Some of them had hidden their things in their pockets and things like that and had gotten through with it, but most of the others had lost their personal belongings.

Marcello: Now you'd been a prisoner-of-war for, oh, approximately two months at this point. How much did you think about home? Did you have time to think about it?

Taylor: Oh, yes, you always have time to think about home even if it's in the evening when you lie down on the ground to sleep. You think about those things. But I'll tell you, you just can't dwell on that too much as a prisoner-of-war because every moment you are challenged to survive, and in our case as chaplains we were ministering to those who were in worse shape than we were. This was really a blessing in a way to those of us who did. They ministered to each other. I mean, they helped each other and things like this. But you did have time to reflect, and, of course, the human mind always goes back to things more pleasant than the present, you know.

Marcello: As a chaplain, what could you do to encourage the enlisted men, the prisoners-of-war, to keep faith, to try and survive, to maintain hope. Hope, of course, was the big thing. If they lost hope they were gone. You as a chaplain . . . how were you able to do this? How did you try to do this, I guess I should say?

Taylor: Well, we did it frankly and in a very positive way by saying to our men . . . these opportunities came quite often to say to a man who was about to give up or wanted to give up, "Well, there's no use." Our answer was always, "There is hope. There is faith. And the thing you need to do is to keep your chin up and keep faith with your Lord and faith with your family and faith with your church because this thing'll be over one of these days. We can't

tell you when it'll be. But we're in the same plight you are, and we believe it's going to be over. So come on now. Let's get with it and stay with it." This way you could encourage men. There's nothing of greater encouragement to anyone than to believe that there's going to be an end to a thing like that, and we were just sure that there would be an end to it.

Marcello: You know, one former prisoner in one of the interviews made a rather interesting comment about this very same subject you're talking about. He mentioned that if one is a criminal and is in prison, he knows approximately when he's going to get out. In other words, he has been sentenced to, let us say, five years, and he won't be serving any more than five years. Perhaps with good behavior and all of that sort of thing, he'll be getting out sooner. But when one is a prisoner-of-war, one doesn't know when the end is going to come, that is, when he is going to cease being a prisoner-of-war. I'm sure that this was one of the real problems that you had to combat.

Taylor: By the same token, that has its benefits because a man could always believe that something great could happen next six months or next year, whereas a prisoner who was serving a definite term might look at five years

and say, "Gee, I just know I can't hold out that long." But a prisoner-of-war who didn't really know could easily in his own mind encourage himself by thinking that this thing might be over in another year or six months. Truly, that's the way it was. We didn't know.

Even in September of 1944, when we had no inkling that the U. S. Navy was as close as it was, to wake up in Cabanatuan about nine or ten o'clock in the morning after we had awakened and to hear and to see these thousands of airplanes coming over the mountains first . . . we heard them a long time before we . . . a little while before we saw them, really. You see? Here it came. Now we didn't know thirty minutes before that what time it would happen, but we felt that it would be one of these days, and there it was.

Marcello: I'm sure that you did witness several instances where somebody would simply give up, lose all hope, and simply die.

Taylor: Oh, yes. I can give you an example.

Marcello: What were the symptoms first of all? How could you tell when a person had given up hope?

Taylor: You'd see him closing in. He'd quit talking. All expression of hope had left him and he was limp-like. He had

no life about him. It was hard to get him to do anything, you know, except just to lie there. You'd see him turn and face the wall if it was in the house or on the ship, for example.

I'll give you one example that fits almost to a "T" every person I saw in this condition. A colonel--a doctor--said to me on the prison ship, "Well, Bob, there's no use to fight this thing anymore. We've fought it now for three years." It had been just about three years. He said, "There's no use to fight it." Then he turned over. I said to him, "Now colonel, the time is getting near." This is after the American planes had come in, but, you see, the Japanese had picked us up and taken us on to Japan. I said, "Colonel, this thing's coming to an end." I said, "The Americans are on their way back. We know that. Don't forget the sight of those airplanes and everything." But he gave up. He was dead in five minutes. A man could die if he wanted to. And he just fought it as long as he wanted to. He just gave up.

It takes courage. You've got to have this hope, and you've got to have this faith that this thing'll come about. It takes that in a prison camp.

Marcello: How do you live, one day at a time?

Taylor: In the prison camp you live one day at a time but with your eye on the future, yes, sir, with that hope and faith. I've heard numerous men say, "If I didn't have faith in my country, above all faith in God, and faith that we were coming through this thing out yonder in a few years, I'd have given up a long time ago." But it takes this. With this you can survive a lot that you couldn't otherwise.

Marcello: Okay, so you left Bilibid Prison, you were on the railroad, and finally you come to Cabanatuan, which is where one of the huge prisoner-of-war camps was located.

Taylor: Yes, we went in there in June of 1942.

Marcello: Now it had already been established by that time.

Taylor: No.

Marcello: Oh, it had not? You were the first people going in there.

Taylor: I was one of the first group in there.

Marcello: Describe what Cabanatuan looked like when you first got there, from a physical standpoint.

Taylor: From a physical standpoint, we came in on . . . marched in on the road from Cabanatuan leading east, and there lay a chain of mountains across the eastern part of the highland. We came down into this flat. We were not more than, oh, five or six or eight miles from these mountains right in a big flat plain. Here we saw this tremendous

spread of army camp houses that General MacArthur and the Philippine government had built for the Philippine Army for training. This was a big training center. It looked as though it stretched for two or three or four miles, just barracks after barracks after barracks, one story, nipa shack roof. We were just certain that was the place we was going, and we marched in there. We were the first ones in that place. We occupied the first two or three or four or five barracks.

There was one water spigot, one water fountain, a faucet. The Japanese had a guard on that faucet. They'd turn the water on. The water was very limited. They'd let it run, and I have seen men lined for several hundred yards with their cups waiting to get a drink of water. Maybe half of them would get through, and then he'd cut it off for awhile.

This was the condition. We had no mess hall. We had no nothing for the first day or two there. When they'd bring rice . . . they had some cauldrons. They had to cook it right out in the open. We were just camping.

Then before we got settled, the prisoners-of-war began to come in. They brought them in by the thousands. This thing grew like a mushroom, you know. We established

a big hospital area on the west side, and there was a divide between the hospital and the main camp--kind of a pasture or field.

I was assigned to the hospital area. So we were permitted to do that. Our chaplains could assign, you know, within the camp. The hospital at one time had twenty-seven wards in it. Then on the east side we had all of these thousands of people. There were about 9,000 of us there. The first six months, from June until December, men died by the thousands. We buried them, as I said, a hundred or more a day. Some days if we had less than a hundred, we was doing pretty good.

Marcello: I understand these burial details were a rather gruesome thing, and the prisoners that I have talked to have obviously mentioned that this was one of the more distasteful experiences that they had as a prisoner-of-war, that is, being on one of these burial details.

Taylor: Yes, you see, they improvised these litters, these things you carry sick people on, and four men would place the body on there without clothing or anything because they didn't bury anybody with even any shorts on or anything because clothing was just that scarce. They'd lift this body up, and there's be a line of them for a hundred or

two yards for half a day, it looked like. They would carry these bodies on these litter carriers out to the grave.

At first, we buried them in common graves--no markers, no nothing. That's the way the Japanese had them to do it. The only record of those who had died was kept was back in the camp. That record eventually came back to the states.

Now later on . . . at first, the Japanese wouldn't permit chaplains to go. No one ever knew why, but they wouldn't. But later on they did permit chaplains to go. Before that, we'd go to the morgue each morning--several morgues around over the prison camp--and conduct the funeral services. Then the men would take them out and bury them. Later on they permitted us to go, and later on they permitted the heads of the camp to keep a record of where these people were buried. We knew, then, who was buried where. But we didn't until that time.

But it was gruesome. This was really a bad situation. There was every kind of disease that you can recall in the Orient, pellagra and scurvy. Well, these were not the fatal ones. The fatal ones were dysentery and malnutrition. This is when the young men died. Man, they just died like flies during those first six months! It was quite gruesome, very, very gruesome.

Marcello: Now even as a chaplain, was it hard for you to find--for want of better words--any love for the Japanese under these situations? How did you as a chaplain react to what was taking place here in this camp so far as your attitude toward your captors was concerned?

Taylor: My personal feeling--and I think it was pretty universal--toward the Japanese leaders, the commanding general of the Philippines who knew what was going on and whose lieutenants out yonder, whose officers and non-commissioned officers were working under his command--our feelings toward him was that he was absolutely no good. We could not feel timely toward a guy like that who'd permit men to suffer and die when in those early days they could have brought in food, adequate food . . . they could have brought in adequate medicines because there was plenty American medicines in the islands right there in Manila and other places, these bases they'd captured. There was plenty of library books and everything else they could have brought into the prison camp to establish a first class, comfortable prison, if you can call a prison camp comfortable.

But they could have at least made it liveable. They could have permitted the men to go out and build latrines, and they could have brought in disinfector-type of medications. They could have helped us to make it sanitary, which they

did not. In other words, as one commander told the fellows at O'Donnell . . . we heard about it. This commander said, "We are not concerned with how many die. The only thing we want to know each morning is how many died the night before. We're not concerned with numbers. Just so we know how many are left in the camp." This tells us something, you know. They were not concerned with human lives. It was just a matter of getting rid of as many as possible. I think they did.

Marcello: Did you ever have the occasion as an officer to become familiar with any of the Japanese officers here at Cabanatuan? Or were they in a world by themselves?

Taylor: Well, for the most part, yes. They stayed to themselves for the most part. However, let me say this. There were individuals among the officers and among the enlisted men who, as far as they would dare to go, would befriend the Americans. We had a Japanese officer whose name I don't recall right now, but he was a very tall and very handsome fellow who would come over to our prison camp, that is, after things settled down, you know, a great deal. He would come over and play volleyball with us. This wasn't right at the beginning. Now right at the beginning, no. The only time you saw a Japanese was when he came through

for an inspection or pulling out everything he could and so forth. Then you had enlisted men who would do little things to show their friendship toward individual prisoners-of-war and American prisoners in general. But I must say that the enlisted men, and to some extent the officers, had to be on their guard, too, because they wouldn't let on if they had a superior around, you see.

Marcello: They had to impress that superior.

Taylor: Right. And the other thing was, and for that reason primarily, you could never depend on John Doe being your friend tomorrow, even as he's your friend today. It depends on the situation.

Marcello: Again, I think we also have to keep in mind several things. First of all, physical punishment was a way of life for the Japanese Army.

Taylor: They punished their own.

Marcello: Secondly, in the minds of the Japanese, it was a disgrace to surrender and to be taken prisoner. And one who did so, so far as they were concerned, had forfeited the right to live. Probably the language barrier to some extent might have been responsible for some of the physical punishment experiences by the Americans.

Taylor: The leadership of the Japanese Army, however, contradicts that. They could speak English for the most part more fluently than some of us Americans because many of them had been educated in this country.

Marcello: But, again, I think when you get down there into the Japanese enlisted ranks, most of those people couldn't speak any English at all.

Taylor: Oh, no. Most of them could not, down in that list, no.

Marcello: I'm not trying to rationalize the Japanese behavior because obviously in a great many cases they were brutal, but in some instances there were factors that probably were responsible for this. That still doesn't make those actions right.

Taylor: In clarification of this idea that the Japanese were humiliated over the fact that anybody would surrender, particularly their own people, we observed that they did not punish their troops who had been taken prisoners-of-war, but they seemed to rejoice seeing them, you see. I've heard this, that to be captured would disgrace a Japanese soldier, but those who came in the tanks and received these prisoners-of-war didn't seem to be too greatly disturbed about them having become prisoners-of-war. I'm sure that the big thing about becoming a prisoner-of-war was that the Japanese soldiers had been indoctrinated that they would never be taken alive. They'd be shot by the Americans. On the other side, many of our troops felt the same way, you see. So that's one thing. But I will say this, that the Japanese were just as rough

on their own troops. They beat one of their troops to death right there at Cabanatuan. I guess he got out of line or something. Boy, they just beat him and he died!

Marcello: Normally, what form would the physical harassment take, that is, the punishment that was dealt out by the Japanese to the American prisoners-of-war? What form would the punishment usually take?

Taylor: Well, with the troops themselves, they'd tie a man up if he was guilty of an infraction like going through the barbed wire fence or something. They'd tie him up to the post out there or to a tree in the hot sun by a fence post. Through the day the troops would go by, and they would kick him, and they would throw a rock at him or things like this, you know, and abuse him. This is one harassment. Along the death march we were told of many who were bayoneted or beat on the shoulders or head with bayonets and things like this. So they had various ways.

And then we had three men in Cabanatuan who were just thinking about, I guess, getting out--trying to escape. They hadn't even gotten out the fence. The Japanese saw them as they were making some approach toward the fence. They came in and tied them up. After about the third day, they beheaded all three of them, you know.

Marcello: Did you witness this, or did you hear about it?

Taylor: Some of the troops were right there. That was over from the hospital. There were three of them. There was a full colonel and a couple of other officers with these people. They were taken over just a short ways from the camp.

Then I did witness eight young Americans . . . there were eight of them going through the barbed wire fences to get a little rice to eat in the early days, and they were brought back into the camp and charged with having tried to escape. The third evening or afternoon late, just before evening about sundown--maybe it was evening--they led them to the west side of the prison camp and executed them and forced other prisoners to come out and dig their grave.

Marcello: Was it a firing squad?

Taylor: A firing squad, yes. I saw them when . . . we were all compelled to come out and watch it because they said, "This will be an example to you and not to try to escape." And so they were shot, and they fell into the graves, and this sort of thing was real gruesome punishment which . . . there was no place for these fellows to go. In the early days the fences were not too good, and they didn't have too many soldiers around. They were just out there getting something to eat. They'd done this before, I guess, and they got caught this time.

Marcello: I understand the Japanese did have some rather interesting policies with regard to escape. At one point in Cabanatuan, did they not divide the men into what were called the ten-man death squads, and if one man escaped, supposedly all the rest of the men in that particular squad would be executed?

Taylor: Right, they had the whole camp . . . I was in one of those squads, and everybody else was. So far as I know, however, they did not carry that out. The nearest to it came one time when two of our medical corpsmen permitted a man who was kind of going out of his head, a patient, to literally crawl out on the road in front of the Japanese guardhouse. They came over and took these two boys. They were going to execute them. But the medical doctor, the camp commander, finally prevailed on them to not execute these men. He said, "Take me instead." He said, "These are just young men, and they couldn't help it. This man who went away was not right in his mind. He was not trying to escape. He didn't know where he was." So he prevailed on them. So they relented and there was no execution.

But these others were actually executed, three officers on the big camp, and then these eight prisoners later on were executed for trying to escape.

Marcello: I would assume that after you were divided into these ten-man death squads that you did more or less keep an eye on the other men in that squad. If one man did have an escape plan, he was going to take all the rest of the men with him.

Taylor: Really, in our prison camp, we took it seriously. But we all knew, I think, pretty much that there was no place to go. We were surrounded by water. The only place you could go if you could get there would be up in the mountains of Northern Luzon to join up with the guerrillas. That was a very risky, very doubtful venture because the Japanese were all over the place. In those days the Filipinos wouldn't dare befriend an American down in the valley there someplace because the Japanese would go in and punish them, their families, and everything else. So it wasn't such a great threat to us because, really, in Cabanatuan we didn't have many people who really tried to escape. These three planners . . . and it's always a little doubtful to know just what they had in mind. We know that these eight young men whom they caught out there were not trying to escape. They were just out there to get something to eat and be back. They would have been back in camp in a little while, but they just unfortunately got caught.

Marcello: Who was responsible for the internal organization of the prisoners? Did this fall upon the American officers?

Taylor: Yes. This is a good point. The big difference, as I see it, with the organization of the American prisoners-of-war in the Philippines, and I guess the same is true in Europe during World War II, as over against that of Korea and maybe Southeast Asia . . . they were all different. But in our prison camp the Japanese looked to the senior officers, after we got into the prison camps, the Japanese looked to the senior officers to organize the camp in a military sort of fashion, structure, shall I say. So we had our own organization, and we looked to the commander of the camp--the American commander of the camp--as our superior. We had a captain or somebody over each barracks. So we were well-organized. We operated under an organized situation.

Marcello: I would assume that was one of the keys to survival, also.

Taylor: That's exactly right. We didn't go every man his own way. For example, in Cabanatuan we tried to help each other even though we were all in great need. I recall we had a TB ward. When the one Red Cross distribution of food came in December, the first year we were in

there . . . we had a TB ward. The doctors sent out word to all of us, "Even though we know you need your tin of milk--powdered milk--these TB patients really need it worse than any of us. All of you who will, donate yours." Man, they donated that stuff like they had a storehouse full of it, out of their graciousness, you know, their consideration for those TB patients. This was all done through organization. Now if every man had been dog-eat-dog, you could have never done a thing like that. This is the way it was. We had an organization of men all through the camp to work with the patients in the hospital.

Marcello: Generally speaking, did the enlisted men obey and respect their officers even though they were in this prisoner-of-war situation?

Taylor: Very much so, and this was the secret to the whole thing. We had an organization, and men did respect the leaders. Even enlisted men respected their sergeants just like they had done in the military. Oh, there may have been a few infractions, you know, but very few.

Marcello: How do you go about maintaining this discipline? How do you account for this? Was it simply the realization that it had to be done in order to survive? Were records kept, let's say, of infractions, and was there the threat that they might be punished afterwards?

Taylor: Right. We had a guardhouse right in the prison camp. We never did have very many in it, but it was maintained by organization from topside to the very smallest of units within the prison camp.

Our leaders kept us informed. For example, we had a radio in the prison camp. The Japanese never did discover it. I didn't know where it was, and very few . . . only the people who operated it knew where it was. But when we'd get reports on our radio about what was going on down in Palau or over in Southeast Asia or later on in the Philippines, it was given to all the men throughout the prison camp without giving the source of it, you see. We worked through the unit like that. We didn't go off man individually to man, you know. I think this is one of the great secrets of our survival, and after we once got through the worst of it, the Japanese respected that.

Oral History Collection

Chaplain Robert Taylor

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Arlington, Texas Date: January 16, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Chaplain Robert Taylor for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on January 16, 1975, in Arlington, Texas. I am interviewing Chaplain Taylor in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese during World War II. This is the second in a series of interviews on Chaplain Taylor's experiences as a prisoner-of-war.

Chaplain Taylor, when we stopped talking the last time, you were still at Cabanatuan in the Philippine Islands--Cabanatuan Prison Camp--and I have some more general questions that I want to ask you about Cabanatuan. As a chaplain, did the Japanese single you out for any sort of special attention either in a negative or in a positive sense? Did they recognize the fact that you were a chaplain and treat you accordingly?

Taylor: In answer to your first question as to recognition, the Japanese at first were a little reluctant to recognize the chaplains as noncombatants. However, later on, they did recognize us as chaplains and permitted us to conduct religious services for the men and work with our people in line of our duty as chaplains. They did not pick us out or select us as men who should receive preferential treatment. We didn't ask for that. We did not want that. We simply wanted to be recognized under the provisions of the Geneva Convention, which permitted us to perform our duties as religious and spiritual leaders within our prison camp. The Japanese did provide us this recognition. The only time we were not permitted to conduct religious services and perform other types of religious functions were on those occasions when we would be moving from base A to base B or prison camp A to prison camp B and such as that.

Marcello: Did they provide any sort of facilities for you in order to hold religious services, or did you have to make your own facilities?

Taylor: We had to kind of be the creators of our own facilities and make provisions for our own services. They did not interfere with that, but neither did they provide

any facilities. For example, we used the dining halls and mess halls for places of assembly. We used, for example, nature. As it grew papaya trees, we would plant them and make an outdoors chapel by growing trees and things like this to form a chapel, sort of an arena. That's where we would hold services when the weather was good. When the weather was inclement, we would hold services in the mess halls.

Marcello: How many chaplains were there here at Cabanatuan?

Taylor: Well, I think the maximum number of people we had at Cabanatuan at any one time was about 10,000. At that time, I would say there must have been . . . out of the twenty-six or twenty-seven chaplains--we had them distributed over all the prison camps--there were possibly ten or fifteen chaplains at Cabanatuan at one time. But this didn't last long, as the details were formed and sent out to the southern islands. Many of them went to Japan, and some went to Manchuria. It had to be in '42 and '43. It boiled down to probably six or eight chaplains at Cabanatuan.

Marcello: I would assume that certain circumstances were much more memorable or poignant than others. For example, would it be safe to say that the Christmas service was an especially telling one for the men and this sort of thing?

Taylor: That would be a right assessment. Days of special emphasis like Christmas, like Easter, or even in the prison camp on the Fourth of July, we had kind of a mixture of religion and celebration. But particularly, I think that Christmas Eve in the prison camp was a time when the men enjoyed the religious performances and religious services all across the prison camp. In each of the compounds we arranged for Christmas Eve services. The Catholics held a Christmas Mass usually at midnight. Protestants came in at our favorite hour, about eleven o'clock, you know, on Sunday morning. It just fell naturally that we'd come in at about eleven o'clock at night with our Christmas Eve service. Then on Christmas Day they had . . . we would have some type of function, such as some of the church groups had their communion services on Sunday. Then on Easter we would also conduct our sunrise service. It was amazingly impressive every time we had this, how these men would come out of their bunks before daylight. You can hear them walking in those wooden shoes coming to the sunrise or daylight service, you know. These were all great days for us.

Marcello: Did you detect that the men perhaps became more melancholy or discouraged around, let us say, Christmas?

Taylor: Not really, no. There's one amazing thing about the prisoners-of-war as I observed them for three and a half years and as I experienced the prison life with them. The optimistic outlook of our people was always very good. I think it was lower the first six months we were in prison, during which time the young men died by the hundreds and by the thousands. These were dark days, really. But after we got over this initial shock of being prisoners and things began to fall in line, fall in place, and things like that, it seems that the optimism and the hope and the faith . . . and we had a radio in our prison camp that brought news of the slowly coming, but surely coming, progress of the armed forces. We followed them across the Pacific and as they came up the southeast islands and on up through Borneo and into the Philippines. This was all very encouraging. So we didn't have a lot of this melancholy, depressed feeling among the men.

Marcello: On the basis of the statements that you've just made, several other questions come to mind. You mentioned the radio a moment ago. You might talk just a little bit more about that because I'm quite sure that radios were contraband material so far as the Japanese were concerned.

Taylor: Very much so, Ron. I guess this was one of the most wonderfully kept secrets of all our prison life because

the Japanese didn't know we had it. It was brought into the men in communications who could put it together, you know, and assemble it. It was brought in piece by piece through unauthorized channels, covert manner, from the city of Manila by the Filipinos who brought it piece by piece to Cabanatuan and planted these pieces among the sacks of feed and rice. As they came in, then the men in communications assembled this short-wave radio station. It functioned in Cabanatuan, I know, for more than two and a half years. The Japanese never knew we had it. But with this machine we could receive information about the war and about the United States.

Marcello: How was it done? Was it a case of bringing all of the parts together at a particular time and listening to the broadcasts by a select few men and then having these men spread the news or something throughout the camp?

Taylor: Well, I don't know. I don't think it was dismantled after it was used every time. Now it may have been, but I rather doubt that. I think that our set-up at Cabanatuan would have made it easy just to have hidden it away in some place where the Japanese would very likely not go and keep it right there. The secret of the whole thing was--the secret of the success of maintaining the secrecy

on it--was the fact that I think only three or four men really knew where it was and anything about it. But we all knew that it was somewhere. We couldn't care less as long as we got this little sheet of paper and word from individuals about the news that was coming in.

Marcello: I would assume that having the radio was a great morale factor not only from the standpoint that you were able to find out what was happening on the outside, but the radio represented, it seems to me, something that you were able to put over on the Japanese. In other words . . .

Taylor: Right. That was the big thing.

Marcello: . . . you had it and they didn't know; therefore, you were smarter than they were, at least in this particular instance.

Taylor: We felt real proud of that, you know, that we could do something like this because the Japanese would come along and they'd feed us all of these little old film strips, you know, about the great victories of the Japanese. They'd come bouncing in and talk about the Japanese bombing San Francisco and New York and all that stuff. They didn't know it, but we were getting direct information from our own people as to our side of the story. In other words, we felt that we were kind of on level ground with them

there. We were getting our information from the U.S. by short-wave radio even though they were feeding us propaganda about their great accomplishments.

Marcello: There is something else you mentioned awhile ago, and I think we perhaps need to talk about it. You mentioned that in those first six months, which were perhaps the most trying, that a great toll was taken on the lives of the younger men. I've heard other prisoners mention this same fact. How do you explain this? In other words, why was it that the younger men seemed to not be as capable of surviving as, perhaps, the older men?

Taylor: Ron, I think it boils down to sheer maturity and experience. As a person grows older . . . you know, those years of, say, seventeen and . . . we had some youngsters of seventeen and younger. Seventeen to twenty are actually pretty formative age brackets in a person's life. I think the sheer shock of becoming a prisoner-of-war and not having the necessities of life and, shall I say, the comforts of life that they'd been accustomed to at home and even in their BOQ's and barracks . . . I think all of this. Then, of course, there was the separation of them from their families completely, and their parents. Most of those young men were single, you know. I think, as I analyzed it, that the fact that their youth as over against the maturity of

the older men--officers and men--this convinced me that it was answered . . . the question could be answered time-wise, age-wise. They were just not old enough. They just hadn't gone through any hard knocks, so to speak.

On the other end of the line, we had what we called beachcombers--those old fellows who had been in the Philippines for years as civilians but were picked up by the military when the war came. Man, they just . . . it was just like water running off a duck's back for those guys. I don't remember a single one of them dying. They were experienced, you know. They were seasoned with this sort of thing--the tropics and the weather and the lack of adequate food.

That's the only way I know to answer it. They were just too young, just too young.

Marcello: It seems to me that you really see the Darwinian theories at work here, at least so far perhaps as the survival of the fittest. It seems as though after those first couple of months, after the weaker ones died, then from that point on there was no way that the ramaining prisoners were ever going to die except if the Japanese lined them all up and shot them or if their ship was sunk by an American submarine or something of this nature.

Taylor: I think this brings up, in connection to what you say, a very valid point here. In our particular case, after those three to six months, the determination of these men came to the forefront, and they were not about to give up. We lost some after that but most of them because of sinking the ships or something else.

Marcello: This brings up another interesting point. As a result of my doing these interviews, many people ask me how these former prisoners have fared after the war, after they got back into civilian life again. You know, generally speaking, most of these people have been quite successful in terms of economics and in other ways, also. Many people think that it's because of their experiences as prisoners-of-war. My own feeling is that this isn't true. In other words, I feel that these men were probably tough mentally and physically before they went in that prisoner-of-war camp. That's why they survived. This tough mental and physical strength has simply carried them into civilian life where they've done quite well.

Taylor: I think that you're right on that. I believe that for the most part. I don't mean to say that all of these young fellows died. I'm talking about experience, now. Some of these boys eighteen and twenty years old had had some pretty hard experiences.

Take my own case. I grew up on a farm. From the time I was seven years of age, I was plowing down furrow, you know. I was seasoned to kind of an outdoor-type of rugged life. This meant a lot to me over there. For example, so many of my fellow airmen and enlisted men and officers came down with malaria in Bataan. I never had malaria, even though the same mosquitoes bit me that bit them.

Marcello: How do you explain that?

Taylor: Well, I asked the doctors about it, and they said, "Well, did you have malaria when you were growing up?" I said, "Yes." Every summer, chills and fevers. My father and mother broke it up on me with quinine and chill tonic or something. They said, "You built up an immunity against it." You see what I mean? This is where the experience comes in.

I think you're right. Now subsequent to the war, I have followed pretty closely these prisoners-of-war and I've been real proud of the accomplishments that they've made. I don't attribute it all to the fact that they gained all of this toughness in the prison camp. I agree with you. They had a lot of it when they went in there.

Marcello: Yes, the had an innate mental and physical toughness, I think.

Taylor: But we have had so many of these men to come back and take up a vocation, many of them in the line they left when they departed here. But they've been very successful across . . . cross-section. Just about like they would have been, perhaps, if they'd have never gone.

Marcello: What was the food like at Cabanatuan?

Taylor: Bad (chuckle). Rice and water lilies. You spoke of these special days, Christmas and Easter. Sometimes the Japanese would even let us have a few carabao. Outside of that it was rice and . . . after the first year we were able to raise some vegetables on the farm. That part that the Japanese would permit us to keep, of course, added to our diet.

Marcello: I assume this was a pretty poor quality of rice, also, was it not?

Taylor: Very. It was not the beautiful clean rice that you and I are accustomed to here. It was the rough . . . we used to speak of it as rice that had been swept from the floors after the prime and the choice rice had been sold to China or some other place by the Japanese.

Marcello: As I recall, you had to be careful of the small pebbles and this sort of thing in that rice, did you not?

Taylor: Yes, rocks and pebbles and weevils and worms and things like that. We didn't worry about that too much.

Marcello: How often were you fed?

Taylor: Well, for a long time there, we got about two meals a day at Cabanatuan. Then later on, I think that when we had our vegetables and everything, we were able to have three meals a day for a couple of years. But I can remember even after we left Cabanatuan and went on up into Japan--we'll probably talk about that in a minute--we had soup three times a day and that was it. Soup--not soup in the sense of chunky soup as we hear spoken of, but just soup, you know.

Marcello: Very watery with maybe some sort of little flavoring.

Taylor: Very watery, yes. You were hard-put to find a leaf or anything in there, you know. So I would say the rations were poor all the way, all the way.

Marcello: This more or less leads into my next question, and I think you've basically answered it. I'll ask it anyhow. What was the thought that was most constantly on everybody's mind while they were prisoners-of-war?

Taylor: Recipes (chuckle). You can't imagine the number of recipes . . . these guys would think of food and talk about food. In their minds they'd come up with a

beautiful recipe. Then they'd pass this recipe on to their fellow prisoners, you know. Of course, what we were doing was just punishing ourselves, you know, with this sort of talk.

Marcello: I've heard some of the prisoners say that their imagination would become so vivid that they could actually believe they were smelling a particular type of food cooking in that camp. One prisoner, for example, mentioned bacon and eggs.

Taylor: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Somewhere in that camp he smelled bacon and eggs cooking, and he was actually wandering around that camp looking for it.

Taylor: That's right . . . trying to find it. Yes, that happened.

Marcello: You mentioned those recipes, and I have seen some of them because a couple of the prisoners that I've interviewed kept secret diaries, or somehow they got hold of pencils and paper and wrote down these recipes. Quite frankly, some of them are just atrocious.

Taylor: Oh, sure, looking at them from this side of the ocean, you know, and from the light of freedom as over against . . . but they looked good there in that prison camp. It's kind of like you go to the Far East, you know, and

you see all of this beautiful clothing over there. They're just beautiful over there, but when you bring them back here and look at them, you wouldn't wear them in downtown Arlington or Fort Worth and Dallas.

Marcello: Now I know that from time to time you also received Red Cross parcels. I think the first one you received there at Cabanatuan was in November of 1942. What did those Red Cross parcels mean in terms of the well-being of the prisoners?

Taylor: Well, let me say at the outset here that we received Red Cross parcels only one time, those of us in the Philippines. They came in November or December of '42. They couldn't have come at a better time because we had been . . . our people were really literally starving. They were dying by the hundreds. We had buried them at O'Donnell, our chaplains up there, at the rate of 500 a day. We were burying them at Cabanatuan as many as 150 a day, perhaps some days more and some days less. It was <u>really</u> a good time. Now in addition to the little parcels, little packets of Red Cross foods, the thing that really helped our camp more than any of that was the bulk-type of foods that came. I can't name all types that came, but it was bulk-type of dried fruits

and various things they sent. Maybe beans and peas and I don't know what else. But all of this was collected to be served through the mess hall, the dining hall, we would say. The Red Cross parcels, the individual packets, contained little things like, well, maybe, little types of canned foods and crackers and maybe some types of medication, some types of toothpaste and things like that. But it was the . . . the big thing that helped us was the bulk food.

The only thing about it that's kind of comical . . . I don't suppose the Japanese had ever eaten any rolled oats--Quacker's rolled oats. We called them oats--oatmeal. They received this stuff . . . I think it too came in bulk form. I can remember how hot under the collar some of our prisoners-of-war were when they found out the Japanese had fed our oats to their horses, you know. This is one of the most nutritious part of the food.

Marcello: I recall that in those Red Cross packages there was also some Klim.

Taylor: Yes, right.

Marcello: And I believe cheese also was included.

Taylor: Some little packets of cheese.

Marcello: I can recall some of the prisoners saying that they still have a fond spot in their heart for Kraft products.

Apparently, the Kraft food was well preserved, but the Borden's cheese was spoiled or something . . .

Taylor: Wasn't so good. Wasn't so good. There's a little sad story about that Klim, that dried powdered milk. We had a TB ward in Cabanatuan with, oh, I guess, 100 or 150 . . . I don't know how many patients. But the doctors put a little plea to the rest of us prisoners and said, "Even though we know you need your milk, the TB patients really need as much as they can get." And it was amazing at the number of prisoners-of-war--hundreds of them--who turned over their tins of powdered milk to the wards. This tells us something, you know. Men under those circumstances can be very charitable even though they have great need themselves.

Marcello: When you received the Red Cross packages in November or December of 1942, did you eat the food all at once, or was it spread out?

Taylor: It was spread out just as far as it would go. This was good, you know.

Marcello: I've heard many prisoners say that those Red Cross packages were really life-savers because it had really gotten bad by that time.

Taylor: We were at the very bottom. But, you know, after getting this food--and we never did get any more--the next Red

Cross food we saw was in Mukden, Manchuria, just before the war was over. The Japanese never permitted Red Cross workers or Red Cross goods or materials or foods to come to Cabanatuan thereafter, or any other camp in the Philippines.

Marcello: How did you supplement your diet in the Philippines at Cabanatuan? Did you ever resort to the eating of snakes, dogs, cats--things of this nature?

Taylor: I don't think any cats . . . I can't say for sure whether any dogs were eaten or not. I don't think we had any snakes there. I never saw a snake in that part of the Philippines in the prison camp. But frogs or anything like that that came around, they were consumed pretty quickly. Then we had a . . . the Japanese did permit us to establish a little commissary--what we'd call a commissary. They permitted certain civilians to bring vegetables--peanuts, maybe some corn, and other types of vegetables--and sometimes some fruit, some oranges that grew in the southern islands, into the camp. This was after the Red Cross, when no more Red Cross parcels came.

Marcello: You were probably getting into 1943 when this took place.

Taylor: Right. This, I would say, was mid-'43 perhaps, under the leadership of Colonel Johnson, who was then our camp commander, and who later became chief of staff for the

United States Army after we came back. Under his leadership and his staff, we were able to get this commissary established, and, you know, the Japanese paid us . . . started paying us along there in '43.

Marcello: I think officers received about twenty pesos a month, is this correct?

Taylor: Right, something like that. I was a captain at the time. I think I got fifteen or twenty pesos a month. I think we all got the same, you know, if we were an officer. But anyway, we had this commissary, and we could go to the commissary and buy these little things. This helped us a great deal. Rice--we could buy some rice in the commissary.

Marcello: What were the prices like?

Taylor: Very cheap, very cheap.

Marcello: I wasn't sure if inflation had taken over there or not.

Taylor: No, not yet. It did after the war.

Marcello: What sort of black market activities took place here in Cabanatuan? I'm sure there must have been a flourishing black market.

Taylor: There was. I don't know to the extent of the black market. Among the prisoners-of-war, I don't think it was tremendously great--not after we became established and so forth. But you can just bet there was some of

it. There's always a few guys, you know, who want to get rich at the expense of others. But we didn't have much of that.

I'll have to commend the American prisoners-of-war on assisting each other and having each other's welfare in mind, you know, as we went along. We were all in the same pot, and we kind of had to prop each other up, you know.

Marcello: Were you ever able to bribe any of the Japanese guards into having them do special favors for you--perhaps get you some additional food or anything of that nature?

Taylor: Well, I don't know whether anyone ever bribed a Japanese guard or not. I suspect, though, there were times when individuals . . . a guard would come along and find a prisoner-of-war that for some reason or for some way had been able to retain his watch or his ring or something of metallic value, you know, in substance. Perhaps he would give it to the Japanese, and maybe the next day the Japanese would bring him a little something--candy or peanuts or something, you know. It wasn't a very great bribe.

Marcello: What were the Japanese guards like at Cabanatuan?

Taylor: It depended on the guard. We had some that we liked very much. They were very considerate of the prisoner-of-war and did everything they could to help them, who

would even share his own lunch with them sometimes. Then there were others who were very rigid and evidently trying to get ahead with their own rank or something, you know. They were very hard on the prisoners-of-war. They were very bitter and seemed to do everything they could to make conditions worse for the prisoner-of-war.

Marcello: What sort of punishment would these guards generally mete our for the prisoners?

Taylor: Well, they usually didn't wait long to do it, and you never knew what would cause a Japanese guard to just jump on you and beat you up, so to speak, or whack you around over the head or back or something with a stick. But this was their usual custom. It was usually a physical sort of punishment that they would mete out, even in the position of taking life. We had some people who they charged with trying to escape from the prison camp. They took them out and chopped their heads off. Things like that, you know. It was always physical--some kind of physical punishment. I can remember one time they paraded through our prison camp with a pole . . . dangling from a pole that was carried on the shoulders of two Japanese soldiers were two or three Filipino heads, you know, that they'd taken from some

people who hadn't cooperated with the Japanese up in the mountains. I think they brought those into the prison camp to impress upon us that it wouldn't do us any good to go to the mountains, that they were operating out there, too. So this was the sort of punishment they'd mete out.

Marcello: I'm sure you observed that physical punishment was a way of life in the Japanese Army, too, was it not?

Taylor: Very much so. They treated their own Japanese soldiers pretty much the same way. They beat one of them to death right there in our prison camp or in their quarters out there. He had done something. We never did know what it was. But they literally beat him to death.

Marcello: I'm sure you had nicknames for a great many of the Japanese guards, did you not?

Taylor: Oh, yes. We called one, as I recall, "Big Speedo" and one "Little Speedo." The "Big Speedo" was a good one, and the "Little Speedo," everybody recognized him as being a devil, you know.

Marcello: How'd they get those names?

Taylor: We gave them to them because of their attitude and the way they treated us, you know. The "Big Speedo" was considerate. "Little Speedo" was a little . . . man, he was a fire ant! He wanted people to do the impossible

all the time for the imperial command of the Japanese forces by just going all out to, you know, do great things.

Marcello: I assume they were called "Speedo" because they were continually trying to hurry up prisoners in every task they were doing.

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: Another one that I've heard mentioned was "Air Raid," who many say was worst of all. Do you remember "Air Raid?"

Taylor: Yes, I remember them talking about "Air Raid," I never had any personal encounter with him, but he was quite a tyrant.

Marcello: And one of the more vivid names that I've heard for another one of these guards was "Liver Lips."

Taylor: "Liver Lips," I never heard of that one. That's a new one.

Marcello: And "Mortimer Snerd," I think, was still another one.

Taylor: Well, that, evidently, came from the fact that he looked like Mortimer Snerd.

Marcello: I guess this is probably typical of American troops anywhere, that is, the giving of these Japanese guards these various nicknames.

Taylor: Oh, yes, that goes kind of with the American lore, you know. You don't have to be around a group long until the nicknames would come up and various things like that.

Marcello: Getting back to these Japanese guards once again, I would assume, and I may be wrong here, that you weren't exactly seeing the cream of the Japanese Army in the prisoner-of-war camps either, were you? In other words, the good soldiers, I would assume, were out on the front line.

Taylor: I think that's right. These soldiers that they put in prison camp responsibility were perhaps a less effective type of soldiers and less aggressive out there somewhere.

Marcello: And I think the same would be true of the commandants. A good officer would have been out there on the front line.

Taylor: I was going to say, I don't think we ever had a commandant . . . I think the highest rank of commandant we ever had was a major there at Cabanatuan. That's when we had 10,000 prisoners there. The most of the prison camps, I think, were commanded by some type of lieutenant, and perhaps not a very good lieutenant at that.

Marcello: Did you, as an officer or as a chaplain, have very much contact with the Japanese officers here at Cabanatuan?

Taylor: Yes, we had quite a bit. The Japanese officers would come through the camp. They quite often would stop and talk with us. Then we had the interpreters, one or two of which made it a point to come over and visit with us. Then on another occasion we had a rather tall Japanese officer who played volleyball with us. He loved to play volleyball. He'd come over and . . . this is after the bad days, you know, along in '43 and '44. He'd come over and play volleyball in the evenings. After dinner we'd usually get out there and play some volleyball, get exercise, and so forth. He would come with us.

As I went on into Japan, I had some more personal contacts with some of the officers up there who would come to the camp. I remember in Moji, Japan . . . Fukuoka, Japan, the commandant, when Mr. Roosevelt died, as soon after that . . . a week or ten days after that, the lieutenant called for the American chaplain, and I went to his home with his aide. He wanted to know why I, as an American chaplain, had not asked permission to conduct a memorial service for Mr. Roosevelt, our President. Well, I thought at first he might just be trying to find out how much we knew in the prison camp. So my answer to him was, "Well, sir, we have not received official information about the death of our President." I, of course, acted

real surprised when I knew that we had heard that he was dead and was pretty sure that he was. Then he was very apologetic and had his aide to bring out papers, and he read to me the record of the death of Mr. Roosevelt. So he and I . . . during that period of time and then for the next two or three days when we held the memorial service, which he sent his guards, his honor guard, we had some personal contact. Things like this all the way once in awhile would indicate personal contact with the commandant or with some other officer of the prison camp.

Marcello: Now here at Cabanatuan I know that the Japanese had the prisoners doing all sorts of . . . had the prisoners going on all sorts of work details. What was the nature of the work that the prisoners had to do here at Cabanatuan?

Taylor: Well, of course, the big details . . . they did local work . . . were those who went out and worked on the farm. But each detail of some twelve or fifteen men had a Japanese guard with him. They would work on the farm.

Marcello: I understand that was very, very difficult work, that is, working in those rice paddies where you were . . . well, it was stoop labor, I suppose, is what it was for the most part.

Taylor: Well, actually, we didn't raise any rice in Cabanatuan that I know of. I don't recall any rice. We raised . . . that

was high land. We didn't have water for the rice and such as that. But we raised potatoes, what they called sweet potatoes (we call them sweet potatoes here, I guess), yams. We raised corn. We raised beans, cucumbers, onions, and various things like that--garlic and all sorts of things like that. So it wouldn't be quite as rough as that rice planting that I watched the natives over there do so much. Now I imagine that some of the prisoners-of-war in some of these other camps maybe did grow rice. But, you see, at Cabanatuan we were just went of the mountains where there was no great amount of water. You have to have water to flood the fields and so forth to plant rice unless it's an upland rice. I don't remember us raising any upland rice--highland rice.

Marcello: Did they insist upon having the officers work, also?

Taylor: Oh, yes. The officers worked at Cabanatuan. They didn't make any preferences there at all. Usually, the officers went right along and worked side by side with the other men. We were just men working, you know. Now at a later time, when we went to Manchuria, for example, the officers of the prison camp did not work except to be supervisors of the details that went out. But down in Cabanatuan we did work.

Marcello: Was there ever any resistance on the part of the officers to working? In other words, is this a violation of the Geneva Convention?

Taylor: It's a violation of the Geneva Convention to require officers to work. However, at Cabanatuan I think for the most part our officers felt that it was almost necessary, and, really, was a great blessing for these men to get out and work with their fellow prisoners-of-war on the farm. I believe that, for the most part, the somewhat senior man of the group out there kind of was the supervisor then. But other officers did work. Now, again, when we went on up to Japan and Manchuria, these officers . . . for example, the Australian camp at Fukuoka 22 that were all Australians except for thirty-two Americans, they resisted the Japanese requiring the officers to work there. However, we did some work. I remember working in the gardens up there some.

Marcello: What were the medical facilities like here at Cabanatuan? I would assume that as a chaplain you made periodic visits to the hospital and things of this nature.

Taylor: Well, I was . . . yes, I was the hospital chaplain for about two years there--about two and a half years. I worked right along with the doctors and with the patients in the hospital. At one time we had about twenty-seven wards and patients. But in those days--this in late '42 and '43 and early '44--in those days, early days, the

doctors didn't have any facilities to amount to anything at all. Later on, I think, the Japanese did permit some facilities to be brought in, such as dental equipment and maybe some laboratory type of equipment where the pathologists, for example, could work. But for the most part, there was never adequate--by any means--medical supplies, medicines themselves. I remember a Dr. Sullivan saying to us chaplains one day, "You chaplains are real fortunate in that you have the facilities that you need to perform your ministry." He said, "We doctors don't have it." He was right, you know. They'd go to those wards faithfully and work among the patients, but they didn't have the medications that they needed to provide for the men.

Marcello: I would assume that in those conditions you saw all sorts of folk remedies and folk medicines being tried. For example, I recall that . . . wasn't charcoal water or charcoal used to combat dysentery?

Taylor: Yes, burned rice, for example. Doctors used some of that on patients themselves, you know, that they'd learned from their parents or somebody else, you know, and various things like that. Of course, that was quite limited in the prison camp because we didn't have the herbs and things like that. Now once we were out on those farms, I suspect a great deal of that came in, you know. And there was some

of that, yes. But, again, I would rather think that the most of this perhaps came in and was applied by the patients themselves, you know, instead of the doctors.

Marcello: Was it true that dysentery was probably the biggest killer after those initial ones had passed?

Taylor: Oh, yes. The reason for that was that the sanitary conditions were very, very poor. The men were very weak when they were without food, you know. Once a person gets weak and the diseases are heavy, such as dysentery, pellagra, scurvy, and all of these things, you know . . .

Marcello: They're all as a result of dietary deficiencies, most of them, are they not?

Taylor: Right, diptheria. Now I don't know what really causes all of the various diseases, but we lost 250 men from diptheria alone because we didn't have the serum to give them.

Marcello: Who determined when a prisoner was sick enough to enter the hospital ward?

Taylor: The doctors. We had doctors in every area of the camp. Then, of course, we had doctors for all of the wards. The men who were doctors over the various areas of the main camp, which is close by the hospital, these men would be sent to the hospital by the doctors. It was carried on very much like it is in military or civilian life.

Marcello: Were there ever any instances where the Japanese would come through the hospital ward and say something to the effect that this man isn't sick, get him out of here, and get him on one of the work details?

Taylor: I suspect there was quite a bit of that, particularly in the areas where we had factories and our prisoners-of-war worked at factories. I don't think they were so pushy about that at Cabanatuan. They may have been when we were trying to get out . . . when they were trying to get the farm activity going.

Marcello: Do you remember a doctor there by the name of Colonel Schwartz?

Taylor: Very much so. Colonel Schwartz and I were very personal friends. He was the commandant of the hospital in Cabanatuan for a long time, and I was his chaplain. He was a very great man.

Marcello: I understand he had to conduct a lot of operations under some rather primitive circumstances.

Taylor: Yes, he was a great surgeon. I think enroute to . . . after we left Cabanatuan, I believe it was Colonel Schwartz who amputated a leg of a man who'd been wounded when our ship was sunk. He had no anesthesia to amount to anything at all. But they amputated the leg anyway.

Marcello: I'm sure there was all sorts of improvising that went on. For example, I can recall having seen it written that the dentist would melt down silver coins for filling and this sort of thing.

Taylor: The doctors and dentists did a tremendous job with the little they had to do with. They performed oral surgery, the dentists did. As you just said, the surgeons performed operations when they had to. It was a real primitive sort of situation. But these doctors were faithful to their profession right to the end.

Marcello: What would they use for anesthetics and this sort of thing?

Taylor: Sometimes they didn't have any. This is like it was in the old frontier days when three or four men would hold one down, you know, and just amputate his leg.

Marcello: There was a special hospital ward there called the "Zero Ward." Do you remember that?

Taylor: Very well.

Marcello: I guess that's where most of the hopeless cases were sent, was it not?

Taylor: Personally, I met only one person back in this country who returned from "Zero Ward." I'd say 99 per cent of those fellows--and I'm sure that some of the doctors could be more accurate--but I would say that 99 per cent

of them never came out once they went in the "Zero Ward." That was the last step.

Marcello: Why was it called the "Zero Ward?" In other words, why were those particular prisoners put in that section? Was it so that they would not be detrimental, let's say, to the morale of those who were more healthy?

Taylor: I never heard that question raised in the prison as to why because they were just . . . they started off from one to twenty-seven wards. I believe there were twenty-seven of them. This ward, I suspect, was called "Zero Ward" by the patients themselves. Then everybody else called it "Zero Ward." It was just a ward where . . . terminal, you know. In hospitals they have a terminal . . . kind of a terminal room, don't they, where terminal patients . . . they just know that they, for the most part, won't come out. I think that was rather it. This other may have entered into it. It is where they could get to these patients, and they knew where the worst patients they had were located in one ward, and we called it "Zero Ward"--rightly named.

Marcello: Let's move on to another subject, and I'm still here at Cabanatuan yet. How often did Japanese inspect your barracks?

Taylor: Usually about . . . I think in the early days they came around about every week.

Marcello: What were some of the objects or items that the prisoners were forbidden to have? Obviously, you couldn't have the radios.

Taylor: No, no. I think the prisoners-of-war were not permitted at first to have knives. If you had a knife laid out there for inspection, you'd probably lost it. In the early days if you had, say, two undershirts . . . they'd have you to lay everything out alongside the barracks, and then they'd come by. If you had two of any one thing, they'd pick up one of them and take it back presumably to redistribute these things, which wasn't a bad idea, I guess, but we soon learned that trick, you know. The trick was to not put two things out. Most of us didn't have two of one kind anyway, but a few did. They'd come by and inspect.

Then as time went on they kind of shifted this responsibility to our own officers. We organized in Cabanatuan in the same ways we were organized in the military. We had our commandant and squad room commanders and barrack commanders and so forth. Later on, the Japanese placed a lot of this responsibility on the officers themselves of the camp to look after their own camp. Then they'd come through, as I remember, about once a month with a big inspection with the top man and his staff. They'd march through like a bunch of beavers going through.

Marcello: Were they ever worried about the cleanliness of the barracks, or was this the sole responsibility of the officers, that is, the American officers who were prisoners-of-war?

Taylor: I think this was a primary responsibility of our own people.

Marcello: In other words, Japanese inspections were only for the purpose of finding contraband and things of this nature.

Taylor: Yes, and just seeing how we were running things, you know.

Marcello: I've heard it said that the Japanese had a one-track mind. One day they might be looking for matches, and you possibly could have writing paper or maybe a gun there. But all they were looking for was matches on that particular day, and that's all they'd take.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: How about writing paper and this sort of thing? Was it forbidden or could you have it?

Taylor: It wasn't forbidden after we got this commissary. There was a little writing paper that we could get in. But for a long while there, the only paper a person could possibly find would be the wrapper off a tin can or something or part of his Red Cross parcels in the early days of '43. But after that, I think we were

able to get a little paper from the commissary. It was on this type of paper that we were able to get maybe tablets like you bought when you were an elementary student, you know, with big lines. It was this type of paper that the most of us used when we wrote manuscripts and kept notes and diaries and these poems and these recipes and things like that.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about some of the improvising that prisoners had to do in this camp. How did you improvise in terms of a toothbrush and toothpaste, let's say?

Taylor: Well, in the early days, you know, the most of us who had been reared out in the country area knew how to make a toothbrush. You get a little shrub off of a limb or something and split the end of it until you had a little brush on the end. That was one of the more common types. And then some of the fellows had been . . . some of us had been able to keep our toothbrush in our pocket of whatever type of uniform we wore in the prison camp. I will say this. I suspect never in the history of the world did toothbrushes last so long as they did over there. Those who had them, you know, didn't throw them away when they got worn a little. They wore them right on down to the base. But as to toothpaste, a lot of us used soap.

We did have some soap. We reasoned it like this. If soap is soap, you know, there's likely not very many germs in it. So we used the soap for toothpaste.

Marcello: Was soap relatively plentiful?

Taylor: Yes . . . I don't recall. Of course, I'm speaking now after we got away from that initial three to six months. During those three to six months <u>everything</u> was scarce. I mean it was just almost nil. But when we got into, say, early '43, the Japanese began to loosen up a little and provide a few things. They permitted . . . and brought soap in. Then later we could buy soap in the commissary and things like that.

Marcello: What did you do for shaving and haircuts?

Taylor: Well, now we had barbers in the prison camp. It wasn't so awfully difficult to find a barber because back there most of the guys had grown up . . . if they had more than two or three boys in the family, at least one of them cut the others' hair, or maybe the daddy would cut the hair or vice versa. So here again, hair began to get long. You saw some people with beards and things like that in the early days because they didn't have a thing to shave with.

We've got a man right here in Fort Worth. He's an officer, retired as a full colonel in the Air Force. He

was in the prison camp, and I remember he acquired the nickname of "Doc" because he grew this tremendous beard and . . . mustache and beard. He looked like a country doctor, you know, with this . . . this old type of doctor. They called him "Doc."

But there again, as time went on, we used soap when we were able to get some kind of razors, and these razors were passed around among the men. I will say that here again the men kept themselves groomed pretty well after those first three to six months.

Marcello: I'm sure that you had to be very concerned with hygiene.

Taylor: Oh, yes, sir. Doctors impressed upon us all the way through to keep clean. We built our own showers and everything. Here again, the Japanese didn't do it for us. We did it ourselves. They would, perhaps, let us scrounge some piping and such as that. We had showers all over the camp.

Marcello: Like you mentioned, we're talking about a camp that had thousands of prisoners. It was almost like a town. There were skilled people in this camp. There were, in other words, people who could do everything.

Taylor: That is right. You had all kinds of talent. If you wanted a plumber, we had men who knew how. If you wanted a radioman, we had radiomen. If you wanted barbers, we had barbers. Cooks, we had cooks. Man, these fellows could

take this inferior grade of rice and cassava roots . . . they'd take that cassava root, for example. When they got through with that stuff--along there in '43 and '43--it was a delectable dish for us, you know. It was nothing in the world but roots of a plant that grows.

Marcello: How did you replace your clothing? Obviously, as time goes on your clothing must have been wearing out.

Taylor: Well, we didn't wear much clothing in Cabanatuan. We went in there, most of us, with some kind of khaki shirts and slacks. But it wasn't long before those slacks became shorts. Maybe we had a couple of sets, one or two. They lasted a long time. Then, here again, I think the Japanese did permit some of the storage houses down in Manila to be opened up, and they brought in additional stuff. But very little, very little. We went out of Cabanatuan on the ships to Japan, the most of us, with only shorts around the trunk of our bodies. A few had some type of shirt, but a very few.

Marcello: You mentioned wooden shoes awhile ago, and I assume that these were shoes that the prisoners had to make after their regular Army issue shoes had worn out.

Taylor: Right, and after about a year or so those Army issue shoes were just about gone. The soles were gone, you know. The prisoners did a lot of walking around the prison camp and

in the farms and so forth. So for the most part we wound up making our own shoes, and all you have to do to make a shoe is to get you a piece of board that's thick enough and get you a good sharp knife. I think most any person can figure out some configuration of the sole of his foot, to kind of match, and we made what we called . . . we called them skivvies. That's not a good word for shoes, but that was the word we used. What it amounted to was simply a piece of wood with a strap across the instep of the foot there, you know. We'd just walk all over the place. Some of them got real fancy. Some person would get a piece of old rubber or something off of the sole of another shoe that was worn out and make him a heel back there, you know.

Marcello: I would assume that after the first six months or something like that, you began to fall into a daily routine, did you not?

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: Life goes on.

Taylor: Yes, we had . . . after the first six or eight months, we began to develop everything. We had people live in certain barracks. Some of the officers had three or

four men in a small bungalow-type of house. We had our library. The Japanese permitted us to bring in--after along early '43--some books from the old Army libraries down around over the islands. We had books to read. They even brought in music, some music for our people to sing. They brought in some instruments for our boys. Here again, you mentioned awhile ago about talent. We had all kinds of talent. People could play a trombone, or they could play a harp, or they could sing or things like this--violins. They even got hold of a violin or two somewhere, you know. We had our own bands and our own choirs and our own libraries. We had our own chapels. We were living as near normal lives as possible under the circumstances.

Marcello: That's about all the questions I have so far as your experiences in Cabanatuan are concerned. Is there anything else that I haven't covered or that I haven't asked that you think needs to be a part of the record at this point?

Taylor: I don't think so except there's one thing we haven't covered--the departures from Cabanatuan. You know, at first it began in a very meager fashion with a few of us going in there . . . I was with the first group that went in--very few of us. Then it grew to about 10,000 people, including the hospital.

But along in early '42, October '42 . . . it was early after we went in as prisoners. About '42 they began to come into the camp and say, "We want 500 men to go to the southern island of Mindanao of Mindoro or somewhere." Our own officers and camp leaders would get this 500 together, usually volunteers at first, and if they didn't get enough volunteers they'd draft a few. But they would get them together, and about 500 went down there. Then the Japanese were all the time coming in and saying, "We need 150 men to go to Japan or Manchuria." These men would volunteer. I think the most of this . . . most of these details going out of prison camp were made up of volunteers. That's one thing I'll have to say for the Japanese. They permitted our leaders to control these sort of things as nearly as possible.

Marcello: How do you explain so many people volunteering? Was it simply that most of these guys felt that it couldn't be any worse some other place?

Taylor: That, and the fact that, you know, after you stay at a place awhile you . . . this is Americanism coming out of these guys, or maybe human. I don't know. But anyway, they were anxious to move on. Just to move would be a change, you know. They would volunteer. You know, it's

like if you stay around the house a long time, if you get a chance you're going to make a trip. Well, the same way. We had people volunteer for some of those details who really should have not gone, but they volunteered because they wanted to get out of Cabanatuan. They wanted to move on.

Marcello: Incidentally, I have a general question here before we actually get to your move out of Cabanatuan. Did you observe that most of the prisoners throughout their prison camp experience became scavengers in that they would collect any little object because it might prove useful some day, like a piece of broken glass or a piece of string or whatever it might be?

Taylor: Oh, yes. I never figured it out except that they had a spirit of . . . that they had perhaps taken with them into the prison camp. You know, a lot of people are just like that. They pick up everything that comes along. Some people never let anything go. Well, out of their cases for the most part, I think, it was out of necessity. They felt a piece of glass might come in handy some time, or a little piece of wood or a rock or whatever it might be.

Marcello: Okay, so when did you leave Cabanatuan?

Taylor: Well, I left with a group of about 1,700 officers who were gathered . . . officers and men, a few men. You see, let me preface this by saying that the Japanese through the years had drained off as many of the enlisted men as possible for the work in the mines and everything, factories, up in Japan and Manchuria. They'd always request so many officers and so many enlisted men. Well, usually it was a preponderance of enlisted men to to the great amount of work, you know, and for the officers to kind of supervise. This is, again, after we got into the normal sort of activities.

Well, by October of 1944, you can imagine that it was still a lot of enlisted men left, but Cabanatuan had dwindled down then to a few hundred men, maybe 1,000 or 2,000 out of 10,000. The rest of them were all dispersed and gone to work somewhere. Well, along in October of '44, after Admiral Halsey and his Navy air force had come in, and things were picking up around there . . .

Marcello: This was in the Manila harbor?

Taylor: Yes, Manila harbor, and the Clark Air Force Base and other Japanese military installations had been just about nullified and neutralized by the American air forces. By this time land forces out of Leyte and southern islands of the Philippines . . . they moved us to Bilibid Prison.

Marcello: Back to Bilibid again.

Taylor: Back to Bilibid.

Marcello: What sort of a trip was it from Cabanatuan to Bilibid Prison?

Taylor: By trucks, and we had to stop any number of times--the convoy I went in--to hide under the trees or something from the American airplanes operating above.

Marcello: Incidentally, when you heard the news of Halsey's planes raiding Manila harbor and the other various installations and the landings at Leyte Gulf, what did this do for your morale?

Taylor: It was tremendous! In fact, we had a ringside seat to Halsey's first flights into Manila.

Marcello: Now this occurred when you were in Bilibid?

Taylor: In Cabanatuan. In September of '44 . . . about the twenty-second of September, '44, if I remember my date, one morning about nine o'clock we heard the dronings of many, many planes coming over the mountains. Pretty soon there came flights of seventy-five to a hundred planes, flight after flight. We knew right away they were Americans--or pretty soon. Then they came right over our camp. Just over the prison camp, they would separate into smaller flights. Some would go south, and some would go north.

Then in a few minutes, we could hear the explosives hitting Clark Field and other places a good long way across there. But we could hear these explosives.

Marcello: It must have been a fantastic experience to see these planes and then to know what was happening.

Taylor: Oh, yes. Yes, this was a great morale-builder. Of course, the only drawback was that, naturally, you think, "Well, it's going to be over in just a week or two." It's kind of a letdown, then, when the Japanese corraled us all and got into Bilibid Prison because we knew what was coming. They were going to try and get us out.

Marcello: What would be the Japanese reaction when these raids occurred, that is, their reaction toward the prisoners?

Taylor: Not any, not any. They were very calm. Of course, this was very late in the war, and I suspect the leaders knew what was coming, anyway. They went on pretty much as usual and without too much reaction. They would watch these planes. Of course, the planes didn't bother our prison camp. They shot down a Japanese plane or two right close to our camp. But anyway, they got us into Bilibid. Then all that fall, from October until the fifteenth of December, the Japanese were not able to get us out because the American bombers came in and bombed Manila Bay and

kept the Japanese ships from coming in. Almost every day the weather was good and all. Then there came kind of a late typhoon which is unusual, I guess, for the Philippines. Sometimes they have them late. They had three or four days of this. During this time of inclement weather when our planes didn't come in to bomb, the Japanese sneaked into Manila Bay with the Oryoku Maru and a few other ships and loaded us onto the Oryoku Maru, about 1,700 of us, with a convoy of about thirteen ships. We went out by Corregidor and then turned north to Japan. This is the night of the thirteenth, all day of the fourteenth, and . . . yes, all day the fourteenth we were under bombing attacks because the weather had cleared, and here the bombers came back.

Marcello: Let's just go back a minute here to your second time around at Bilibid. What did you do during that approximately two-month period that you were at Bilibid?

Taylor: Well, we didn't do anything except just carry on from day to day. As prisoners-of-war there wasn't much to do there, you see. As a chaplain, I fell right into the program. There was already a chaplain or two in Bilibid.

Marcello: They had established some sort of a hospital there, too, had they not, at Bilibid?

Taylor: Well, that was . . . they had a hospital, an old hospital area that was used as a hospital the same as we had at

Cabanatuan. We had a hospital area. The Navy . . . Bilibid was kind of reserved as a Navy center of prisoners-of-war. All of the high officials and many of the doctors of the Navy were there. So we occupied primarily the . . . part of the hospital area when we went in there. It was kind of a Navy center. But some of the Navy people, then, were selected to go with us on this trip, you see.

Marcello: What were your quarters like here at Bilibid? Were you put in cells?

Taylor: No, no. We were in open barracks type of buildings here like we were at Cabanatuan. I guess we did have a few people the Japanese held in cells. I don't remember now whether they had any at all at that time.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned, then, that about mid-December you were loaded on this ship and were bound for Japan. Now what was the name of the ship?

Taylor: Oryoku Maru.

Marcello: Okay, describe what the ship was like.

Taylor: The ship was a beautiful luxury liner of the Japanese before the war. Compared with the large American ships, it was small, but it was a beautiful and, I suspect, a very comfortable ship. Of course, we were put in the hull of the ship. We were first marched . . . about 1,660 or 1,700 . . . right close to 1,700. We were

marched out across Quezon Bridge, down around the old walled city, down to pier seven which was the longest pier in the world at the beginning of World War II. There's where the Oryoku Maru was anchored. The Japanese were very jittery and very anxious to get us aboard and get us out of there because they knew that the moment that the weather cleared the Americans would be back.

But they didn't get us out. We got around . . . on the fourteenth, the American dive bombers came in and destroyed, or chased away, every escorting vessel with us. Then late in the afternoon, after strafing the decks of our ship and knocking out the gun emplacements . . . late in the afternoon, they came in and dropped a bomb right close to the stern of our ship and crippled it so it couldn't get away in the night.

Marcello: Were you in the ship during this period?

Taylor: Oh, yes. We were right in the hull of the ship. There were three, what we called, holds in the ship, down in the hull. Up here in the forward deck--the hold of the ship--we had about 650. In the middle deck, we had about 200 or 300, maybe 400. Then the rest of our prisoners were in the aft hold of the ship. That's where we were. It was hot and humid and no food and no water to amount to anything. So you can imagine the conditions were bad, real bad. Well, this bomb crippled us about five o'clock in the afternoon.

Then during the night the Japanese towed the ship. We could hear the towing ship . . . boat out there pulling us into what later turned out to be Subic Bay. It was the old Navy station that's used now as a Marine-Navy station by the United States, I believe. They pulled us into this Subic Bay and Mr. Wada, the Japanese interpreter, said to us, "When daylight comes, we'll get you off of the ship."

But they didn't, and the next morning they kept us on, and about eight o'clock the Americans came in and didn't see anybody moving around on the ship and dropped their bombs, a string of bombs. One exploded on the aft part of the ship, and one or two went right into the aft hold of the ship. One or two fell up here toward the center and the forward. So in the aft hold there was about 650 men killed.

Then Mr. Wada sent us word that we could come out. By the time we got out . . . I guess several hundred got into the water and were swimming ashore. The American bombers came back. There were three of them--dive bombers. They saw all of this group coming out, and one of them circled--dropped down and circled--low around the ship and saw that we were Americans. They dipped their wings in salute and went back and joined the other two, and they went away and stayed away for about two or three hours.

Marcello: What was it like being in the hold of that ship while this bombing and strafing was going on? What kind of thoughts were going through your mind?

Taylor: Well, it's hard to describe those moments unless you were actually there, but I'll tell you. My first impression was that the American soldiers--prisoners-of-war--were soldiers to the very end. I can remember hearing them say now as the guns were strafing the decks of that ship, you'd hear these GI's say, "Give them heck, Joe." Here we were right down under it. It was a tremendous experience. A lot of our men, of course, were in bad shape by this time. Of course, there was sickness. But I guess there were hundreds of Japanese killed by those strafings above. There just had to as reports came down to us.

But the thought was, well, after you've gone through as much as you have, I think the good Lord kind of prepares us to accept whatever comes. We were prepared for anything. We were prepared for a bomb to explode the ship and destroy us all. There was no panic. The men acted with as much natural attitude or natural reaction, I think, in those moments as I had ever seen anybody act.

Now this couldn't be except that you'd gone through a lot of experiences already, you see. There are other

circumstances in life that would have brought on panic if something like this would have happened. Everybody would have tried to climb out of the holds of those ships. But for the most part, nobody moved. Nobody said a word except you could hear some guy speak up as I did, "Who wants to buy my watch?" During an awful moment like . . . and this broke the spell. Everybody laughed, you know. This is American spirit. You just can't accredit it to anything else. The men who believed in their country and who loved their country and who detested the way the Japanese were treating the prisoners-of-war--put them in the hull of a ship, you know, and not even mark the ship or anything else. But they were soldiers to the end, you know.

Marcello: Okay, so you finally have to abandon ship, and you hit the water. How far from shore were you?

Taylor: Well, after being in the hull of that ship about two days and nights, when we came out we discovered that it's difficult to see very well. It's amazing how quickly your eyes are affected by almost total darkness in a ship--no windows, no lights, or anything. I would judge it was possibly a couple a hundred yards, maybe three hundred yards, out to the ship. You see, they could come in just so far. I don't think, though, it was more than probably a couple hundred yards.

Marcello: In other words, you didn't have to do a whole lot of swimming.

Taylor: No, and we clustered together. Some of the debris that had been thrown from the ship by the explosions, pieces of plank and things like that . . . some of the patients who couldn't swim very well or who were too weak clustered to those and swam in. As we swam in, however, the Japanese were watching to be sure that nobody drifted to one side to escape or anything. The few who did because they couldn't prevent it were shot right there in the water. But we got ashore, and then after about three hours the Americans came back and, of course, there was no sign of life around that ship. Again, we had a ringside seat, and they just barreled down on it just one right after the other. They just dropped a string of bombs from the forward deck . . . from the bow to the stern. That old ship went up in flames in just a few minutes. I don't know how long it took it to sink but not very long.

Marcello: Meanwhile, what were the Japanese doing all this time?

Taylor: Just guarding us and seeing that we didn't escape. We were put in tennis courts which were located, oh, I guess, 350 yards away.

Marcello: Okay, so what happened from that point?

Taylor: Well, we were retained on this tennis court for six days and nights and given a little dry rice to eat. Of course,

we had water there on the tennis courts. Then, after six days, the Japanese came in with trucks, loaded us onto these trucks, and took us to San Fernando, Pampanga, which is the capital of the province in central Luzon. We stayed there over, I believe, one or two nights. By this time, it was coming up on Christmas. The American bombers and fighter planes were operating all over the Philippines. They even operated over us right there on the tennis courts, knocking out Japanese emplacements and everything. They knew where we were then. They didn't drop any bombs on us in this tennis court.

But in the provincial prison camp or jailhouse up in San Fernando, Pampanga, we were held over a couple of nights. The worst wounded patients and the sick patients were loaded on some trucks and taken back to Cabanatuan. They never reached Cabanatuan because the Japanese took them out to the edge of town and decapitated the whole outfit. It was this incident that brought on a great inquiry during the war crimes trials in Tokyo. Finally, one of the little guards was put under pressure, and he told what happened. Then they went there and they found these graves and these men--about twenty of them--that we had put on trucks to go back.

Well, on the Christmas Eve of 1944, they put us on rail cars. Even while we were loading and while we traveled

along to Clark Field, there were fighter planes having dog fights with the Japanese Zeroes up above. We went on through, though, and they put prisoners-of-war up on top of these boxcars to try to prevent the Americans from bombing us. I guess it worked. They didn't bomb us. We went on through and got to San Fernando, La Union. This is adjacent or pretty close to the north side of Lingayen Gulf. We were held there through Christmas Day and the following two days on the beaches and up in a little schoolhouse on the side of a hill.

Marcello: Were you still about to hold your Christmas services at this time?

Taylor: No, we were on the move then, and this was the only Chriatmas Eve that we failed to have a Christmas service because we were on the move and we could not. Of course, in a way we did among ourselves in small groups, as we'd pass Christmas greetings and things like that with small prayer meetings and moments of devotion between the men, you know.

But then on the twenty-seventh of December--that's two days after Christmas--they loaded us on to some more ships that came in--a couple more ships. We went out on little boats to these ships. We sailed for Japan.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going to Japan?

Taylor: Well, we, of course, thought . . . we really hoped that the sinking of these ships in Subic Bay would be the end of it and that the Japanese would not get us out of the Philippines because we felt that the Americans would come in right away, and they did. Three days after we sailed from Lingayen Gulf, the American Navy ships entered the Lingayen Gulf area and were shelling all of this beach where we were held until the twenty-seventh--just two or three days later.

Marcello: In other words, you didn't want to go back to Japan because you simply believed that that would prolong your liberation?

Taylor: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Plus, there was always the danger, I assume, of being sunk while you were on your way to Japan.

Taylor: Well, I don't think the sinking concerned us a great deal because we . . . as I said awhile ago, after you go so long, you just don't dwell on those things. Our main ambition, our main desire, was to rid ourselves of these doggone ships, you know, and stay in the Philippines. We were greatly in hopes that the Japanese would not have the chance to get us out.

But they had this one chance on the twenty-seventh. Evidently, they slipped in there with a couple of ships and took us out and got us as far as Formosa. Then they

were forced into the harbor at Formosa either for supplies or fuel or something.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get from Lingayen Gulf to Formosa?

Taylor: Well, let me reconstruct this thing. I'd say two or three days.

Marcello: What were conditions like aboard the particular ship that you were on?

Taylor: Very bad. That old ship--the old scow we called it--had been used as a ship to transport horses from Japan to the Philippines. It hadn't been cleaned in ten years. It was full of lice. We were a "lousy" group by the time we got to Formosa.

Marcello: Did they provide any sort of food and water and sanitary facilities and this sort of thing while you were aboard this cavalry ship?

Taylor: No, no sanitary facilities at all on that thing. For the waste, they provided cans around in different compartments. Water, about once a day they would send a . . . we would have to send the detail up to the deck to get water that came from barrels. They'd pass it down in buckets--a chain of men passing it down to the people. The water would be distributed by cup to men. This was a grave danger to us, this shortage of water. A man can

live a long time without eating, but he can't go too long without some water. It was during those days that men would take a West Point graduate ring that they'd been hiding for years while they were prisoners and give it to a Japanese for a cup of water to drink. Things like this, you know. It was a very trying time. But we reached Japan after leaving there, I'd say, the morning of the twenty-eighth of January. It may have been the twenty-ninth.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get from Formosa to Japan?

Taylor: Well, now we left Formosa on about the thirteenth of January. We were bombed there. Chennault's outfit, bombers, came in from China and destroyed the old scow, which we were glad to see the old scow go. But the one we got after that wasn't any improvement.

Marcello: Were you off the scow when the bombing took place?

Taylor: No, we were right on it again. Here's where we lost another 500 of our men in the forward deck of the ship this time. Then we left Formosa with only about 500 of our original group of 1,700. On the way to Japan, I guess more than 100 of those died. So we got to Japan maybe with 400 or 450 out of the 1,700. Two hundred and fifty or more of those died while we were in Japan. So out of the 1,700 that we had left Manila with, surviving from that group was about 200 men. That's all.

Marcello: In other words, the rest had either been killed in the air raids or had died from the various diseases and malnutrition and so on, exposure, on the ship itself.

Taylor: For example, there were sixteen chaplains on that ship. Sixteen, I believe, was the number. Only two of us survived. There was a long trip in which the attrition was just something unheard of.

Marcello: What happened to the bodies? You mentioned that men were dying on this trip between Formosa and Japan. What was done with the bodies?

Taylor: The Japanese were great for cremating bodies. Those who were killed on the ship in the harbor at Formosa were cremated. We received the ashes later on in urns. Those who died at sea, we buried them at sea. Each morning we had a burial ceremony in the hull of the ship and buried the men at sea.

Marcello: Let's just recapitulate and go back a minute, Chaplain Taylor. Awhile ago you mentioned that when you got to Formosa you got caught in another air raid, this time by some of Chennault's China-based airplanes. Describe what that attack was like in whatever detail you remember.

Taylor: Well, we had sailed into a Formosa harbor called Takao. I believe it was Takao harbor. While we were there getting

ready to go . . . taking on fuel and sugar and such as that--the Japanese were loading--we received a bombing raid warning. Of course, the Japanese rushed us back into the holds of the ship. Then we heard the planes coming. Sure enough, one of them picked out our old ship we were on and bombed it. We lost about 500 men who were killed.

Marcello: What does it feel like when a ship is hit by those bombers?

Taylor: Well, it's a pretty terrifying experience to go through because you first feel the impact of your explosion, and then there's the falling of the debris and the flying of planks and everything from the decks. Then there's the quiet moment when seemingly everything's over--complete silence. You don't hear a scream; you don't hear a moan. You don't hear anything for just a moment. Then we began to get to our feet, you know. When something like that happens, you fall flat on your stomach and get as close to whatever you're standing or lying on as possible.

So in my particular group . . . I had a group of ten men that I was kind of the leader of for purposes of receiving their rice and water. We all just fell in a cluster right on the deck of the ship. When I was able to get up, I had been wounded in my wrist and my hip by

flying fragments from shells. Only about two of us got up. The rest of them were all dead in my group. Then we began . . . those of us who were still alive, we began to do our best to help those who were wounded. There wasn't much we could do except to get around among them and see how badly they were hurt. We had doctors there, a few of those who survived. It's a pretty terrifying thing. Out of the . . . about eleven or twelve hundred of us that had been living, as I say, about 500 were killed. So that left us a very few--probably 500 or so prisoners to go on to Japan.

Marcello: By this time are you getting used to death, or do you ever get used to it?

Taylor: You never get used to it. The only thing, you do kind of process yourself into accepting whatever comes. You go at it more or less with maturity. You don't panic when something like this happens.

Marcello: It's not really fatalism, however,

Taylor: Not fatalism, no, not at all. You do everything to protect yourself and protect your men. But there is something about it that you go through. If you go through with it sufficiently enough, you get to the place that you methodically go about doing what you have to do, you see, without panicking.

Marcello: So how long was it after the attack that you were finally able to get out of Formosa?

Taylor: We left Formosa . . . this was on about the ninth of January that these bombs hit us.

Marcello: Incidentally, you mentioned that when you were at Cabanatuan your clothing basically consisted of a pair of shorts and little else. Are we talking about wintertime now?

Taylor: Yes, we're beginning to get into winter. You know, when we left Cabanatuan and Manila, this was mid-December. That's summer out there, just about. By the time we get to Formosa, it's beginning to get a little cooler. Not a great deal. It's still tropical-like in Formosa. Then when we leave Formosa for Japan, we're getting into winter when snow accumulates on the decks of the ships, and sleet and rain and cold weather.

Marcello: I'm sure the ships were well-heated and well-insulated and all this sort of thing (chuckle).

Taylor: Didn't have any of it. No insulation, no heat. The only heat we had was just the heat that we generated from our own bodies, you know, in the crowded conditions.

Marcello: I gather that the Japanese were not issuing any winter clothing at this time.

Taylor: No, no winter clothing.

Marcello: What sort of ship was this that you now boarded for this trip to Japan?

Taylor: Very similar to the old scow that we'd been on from San Fernando, La Union, or Lingayen Gulf into Formosa. Pretty much the same old-type of ship.

Marcello: But by this time your numbers have been depleted quite a bit.

Taylor: Right. We were down to . . . oh, I can't say exactly how many we had--probably 500, maybe 550.

Marcello: So if nothing else, you probably had at least a little bit more room aboard that ship.

Taylor: Yes, we had more room. But, of course, when you have more room, the colder it gets. It was getting pretty cold. We were shivering throughout the day and night by this time.

Marcello: Okay, describe the trip, then, between Formosa and Japan.

Taylor: Well, from Formosa to Japan was a very trying trip of suffering. Again, we didn't have adequate food. We didn't have adequate water. We certainly had no heat. The men had no clothing. Consequently, from Formosa to Moji, Japan, we lost--out of that 500--about 250 men, something like that, out of the 500 or 600. Those men died every day, every night. We buried them at sea as we went along.

Marcello: As a chaplain, is this sort of thing really testing your faith?

Taylor: Well, I wouldn't . . . yes, in a way. It does. You could say it tests our faith. The chaplains performed their duties and knew that under such circumstances as these, not only did it test our faith but it was a great challenge to us to minister to the men, to do what we could for them under these trying conditions.

Marcello: What do you tell men under these conditions? How do you counsel them?

Taylor: There's always the message--the spiritual ministry--that a minister can perform under the most trying of experiences. Number one is that we can tell our men that although the man who believes is not exempted from suffering, he's not exempted from danger, he's not exempt from sickness or disease, if he will put his trust and his faith in God and the Christ that we serve, he may also find, even in the midst of suffering and in the midst of disease and in the midst of trouble, he may find an inner peace that helps him through such hours. They accept this. They are looking for something. They're groping for something and they find it. That is the true message of a Christian at such an hour.

Marcello: What sort of trouble or what sort of problems did American submarines create on this trip between Formosa and Japan?

Taylor: They were quite a nuisance to us because we were dodging submarines most of the way. Every once in awhile you'd hear this bell ring, you know, a signal for the crew and for the guards to be alert for submarines. Then we'd feel the ship as it abruptly changed to a forty-five-degree angle and go a certain few moments this way, and then it turned again right quick. Then you knew very well what they were doing. They were dodging these submarines--trying to. Fortunately, we were able to dodge them.

Marcello: Was the submarine menace more frightening then the airplanes, or was it six of one and half a dozen of the othe?

Taylor: It was worse by far because, you know, we could hear the airplanes coming. These submarines, the only thing you could hear was maybe the sonar beams bumping off the hull of the ship or something.

Marcello: That had to be unnerving.

Taylor: Yes, it was. And you never knew when they might slip one on you. This was kind of a new way of life for all of us.

Marcello: Were you part of a convoy?

Taylor: We started out as a part of a convoy, but the first day out we lost thirteen ships of the fourteen right away. They were either sunk or turned away by the American bombers.

Marcello: As we were talking during our break, it may have been to your benefit that this was an old scow because it didn't make the most inviting target, I would assume, for the submarines or the airplanes.

Taylor: Oh, yes. You can bet that the U. S. Naval fleet of submarines were looking for priority ships. Number one, the fighting-type of vessels--the destroyers and what have you. But on the other hand, by that time in the war, we had such forces out there that we were not too choosy, I imagine. They would unload on anything that come along if it was Japanese.

Marcello: I would assume that the hatches were battened down. In other words, that there was no way that you could have possibly gotten out of that ship had it been torpedoed by a submarine.

Taylor: Well, I wouldn't say that they were battened down. We had guards. If it had been hit by a submarine shell, very likely some of the men would have clammered out through the top. I suspect the Japanese would not have objected because by that time they themselves would be seeking safety, I suspect. It would be every man for himself, probably, if the ship was sinking.

Marcello: To use the old expression, I guess you were really between a rock and a hard place here because even if a torpedo did

hit that ship and it was sinking and you had to get into the ocean, I'm sure chances of survival would have been slim given how cold it was.

Taylor: Yes, and scarcity of vessels, you know, unless some other Japanese vessel came along. They were so busy with the war that they didn't have much time to bother with floating prisoners-of-war, you know. Your chance would have been one out of a million, I imagine.

Marcello: Okay, so you finally get into Moji, Japan. What happened here?

Taylor: Well, we walked off the ship on that cold, snowy day. It was snowing in Moji, Japan. I can remember us going down the gangplanks barefooted with just shorts around the trunk of our body for the most part. We'd not been issued any warm clothing. We were marched across two or three blocks . . . a few blocks here. Patients were taken in some type of vehicle, and the rest of us were marched over to this big city hall. It looked something like a city hall. It was here that the Japanese Red Cross met us. This was the first time we'd seen the Red Cross people in a long time. They had little packages or little crates of fruit and such as that that they gave us. Then those of us who were wounded or sick, they took us in Japanese ambulances to the hospital.

Marcello: What was your health like at this time?

Taylor: Well, my health was in pretty bad shape at this time because I had suffered a concussion in my chest during the sinking of the ship in Formosa. By this time I had recovered to the extent that I could get up on my own strength and walk with my own strength. But I did have a broken arm. My left arm . . . fragments had gone through my wrist. It was still in a sling. I had a minor wound in my left hip.

Marcello: Your arm had never been set, I gather.

Taylor: No, no. The doctor simply looked at it and said, "Well, all you need is a sling here." Fortunately, it grew back very straight. They examined it. Only one bone was really broken in it. The rest of them held it straight. But anyway, I went to the hospital with about 120 men. In about ten days, out of the 120 we were down to about thirty-two. Most of them died. In other words, out of the . . . I'd say around 600 or maybe 650. I don't know how many got there more or less. Within a month, about 200 or 250 of those died from exposure and wounds and things like that.

Marcello: I have a couple of questions to ask at this point. First, can you see the attitude of the Japanese changing in any way, that is, in comparison to what their attitude had been when you were initially captured?

Taylor: Only by virtue of the fact that we were in a little different environment now. For example, when we walked off that gangplank in Moji, Japan, we were in a civilian sort of atmosphere. These Red Cross people, of course, were civilians. Even though we're still under the control of the military, we were . . . the drivers of those vehicles were apparently civilian drivers.

Marcello: But do you still see this sense of superiority that was so evident when you were captured?

Taylor: Oh, in the military, yes. It did not change. Even after we were in a hospital, one night there was a big commotion in the Moji hospital. The Japanese guards were running around, and the doctors and the workers were running and making a lot of noise. We inquired what happened. They said, "Well, we just received word that Japan has just bombed San Francisco again, and New York. Our super flying bombers are operating over the United States." They'd been fed this propaganda, see, by their people. But they were still very optimistic.

Marcello: Had Moji been hit by American bombers yet?

Taylor: Moji proper had not.

Marcello: So in other words, then, you wouldn't have received a necessarily hostile reception from those civilians.

Taylor: No, not right then. Now a few days later, the B-29's . . . within a short time, the B-29's had begun to operate all over Tokyo and Fukuoka. Along in the later part of February, I guess, maybe mid-February, the thirty-two of us who survived this hospital ordeal were put on trains and taken to Fukuoka Prison Camp Number Twenty-two. This was an Australian camp.

Marcello: What was the train trip like between the hospital and Fukuoka?

Taylor: Very nice. It was civilian-type transportation, very comfortable, very warm.

Marcello: Did they allow you to view the countryside? I know a lot of cases when prisoners were . . .

Taylor: No, they took us by night and pulled down the shades.

Marcello: I see. I gather it only took you a relatively short time to get to that prison camp.

Taylor: Very, very short. As I remember it was less than an hour or an hour and a half.

Marcello: What was Fukuoka like?

Taylor: Fukuoka was adjacent to a coal mine. The prisoners-of-war there, who were Australians, were working in these coal mines. The thirty-two of us, with few exceptions, were placed at first in the hospital area of the camp. We were treated by a Dutch doctor who had been serving with the

Australians. But it was a very nice camp. It was very comfortable compared to what we had had. They had heat and they . . . of course, the food was somewhat better. As I remember, we had rice and soup a couple or three times a day. A little later, when we improved some, we began to work in their gardens--the Japanese gardens there. We were there from the latter part of February until the latter part of April. We were there about two months in that camp.

Marcello: And as you mentioned, it was basically a case of recuperating and then also working in this vegetable garden.

Taylor: Right, and we got along pretty well. We didn't lose any of our thirty-two men, as I recall, while we were there. It was during this period of time that the President of our country died. I related this story to you earlier about the Japanese commandant who made a statement that I will always remember. He was a young lieutenant who had been educated in America. He made the statement when he . . . he was surprised that we had not asked permission to have this memorial for our President. Then he said to me . . . now whether he would say . . . I'm sure he would not have said it to his people. He said to me, "Of all the leaders of the various countries, I admire Mr. Roosevelt as one of the greatest." He'd been President then a good

many years. I guess he was President when he was over here in school, you know. But anyway, I thought that was a little unusual.

Marcello: What blow was that to the morale of the prisoners when they found out that Roosevelt had died? Did it affect the morale in one way or another?

Taylor: None whatsoever because we knew that our country did not depend on the President like countries with dictatorships depend on their leaders. We've got Congress and we've got other leaders who really lead the country in a very efficient way even in the absence of the President.

Marcello: Were the Japanese relatively jubilant when they found out about Roosevelt's death?

Taylor: I don't think so. Some of them may have been. Some of the military may have dreamed dreams that this might weaken the country, but if they did it was because they just didn't know our country. That's all.

Marcello: What were your impressions of the Australian prisoners that were here?

Taylor: I was greatly impressed with the Australian people--leaders. There was a Captain Moore, and I've forgotten some of the other names. Captain Moore, I think, was a senior Australian man in the camp. They, like the Americans, conducted a military-like camp. The Japanese

permitted them to do so. They maintained good discipline among their troops. They were able to instill in the minds of their fellow prisoners-of-war that we're all in this thing together, and we're going to live through it. They were wonderful. We enjoyed them very much.

Marcello: I assume, then, from what you've said, that they probably tried to accommodate you and help you in every way to adjust to your surroundings here at Fukuoka.

Taylor: They went all out to assist us. They put us right in the hospital, and their doctor took as good care of us as possible. They were just great to us.

Marcello: In the meantime, did you have any further treatment for your wrist?

Taylor: Yes, it was here that the doctor treated my wrist daily and checked it and determined that it was growing back promptly . . . my hip and everything. It was just fine. We were in Fukuoka, then, until the last of April, about the twenty-fifth of April.

Marcello: And then this is when they moved you to Manchuria?

Taylor: Right, they came in and moved . . . they didn't move any of the Australians out of the camp, but they came in and picked up just about all of the Americans. Now they left two or three Americans there who were still in the hospital

and hadn't recovered completely. So they left them there, and they pulled us out and took us by truck to Fukuoka. By this time, the last week of April, Fukuoka had nobody living in it. It was completely destroyed. It had been completely destroyed, apparently, because we drove right through by the depot and right on through the town down to the pier where the little ships came. We didn't see any business in operation, nothing but shells of buildings. They had all been bombed out by the American B-29's. Even the night we arrived, we stayed in a little park right adjacent to where we were going to load on the ship that night. This was in the afternoon. The sun was shining. During that night, they had one bombing warning after another. Two or three times we went aboard the ship and were going to sleep on the ship. But two or three times the Japanese alerted us, and we left the ship and went out on the beach in order . . . they were afraid the ship would be bombed or something. Then the next morning before daylight, a good long time before day, we felt ourselves shipping out. We sailed across as fast as we could to Pusan, Korea, the next day.

Marcello: Did you know that you were ultimately going to Manchuria? Had they told you where you were going?

Taylor: We knew this by this time, yes.

Marcello: What were your feelings about going from Japan to Manchuria?

Taylor: It was alright with us. It was alright with us. It didn't seem to disturb us.

Marcello: Well, I guess it wasn't too healthy in Japan with all those bombers and so on.

Taylor: No, no, it wasn't because the bombers were raiding all over the place. This is one reason the Japanese were moving us on up to Manchuria. You see, their object was to hold as many prisoners-of-war, particularly officers, as hostages against the day of settlement, I suppose, because they didn't know at that time whether Japan would be in the war long. They thought they were going to fight on and on, I think.

Marcello: Given the Japanese attitude and the Japanese mentality with which you had now had a good deal of first hand experience, did you think that they were ultimately going to kill you? In other words, suppose it was quite evident that they were going to be beaten, did you ever have the feeling that ultimately you weren't going to come out of this alive?

Taylor: Well, we didn't rule that possibility out by any reason. However, we never dwelt on it a great deal because we

didn't know, and it just didn't bother us too much, you know, one way or another about that. But we did maintain the hope and faith by this time that we would be cared for unless we were killed by our own bombs or something like that.

Marcello: I assume this trip from Japan over to Pusan was a relatively short trip.

Taylor: Just a few hours.

Marcello: Yes, it's not too far from Japan to Korea.

Taylor: As I remember, we left Fukuoka early in the morning--maybe daylight, a little before daylight, maybe--and we were in Pusan in the mid-afternoon.

Marcello: Okay, so what happened at that point when you got over to Pusan?

Taylor: Well, when we got to Pusan, we ran into a different atmosphere completely--one of friendliness on the part of the Japanese who met us there. There was a Japanese doctor from Manchuria--Mukden, Manchuria--and quite a staff of aides and assistants as well as guards. The first night we were there, we were all bedded down in the city hall with little grass mats. They fed us soybeans, rice, and some fish. We had a very nice meal.

Marcello: I assume you had been eating fairly well there at Fukuoka.

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Comparatively speaking.

Taylor: Compared to what we had had before, we had been eating better. But now that we were over into Korea and out of the war zone and with this doctor meeting us, we began, then, to travel by train up through South Korea to Seoul and all up through there. They had regular stops that they would stop and pick up food. I can remember one time that this doctor refused . . . he always checked the food. He refused to accept food. We went without food for a few hours until we made another stop. His explanation to us was that this food was not adequate. It was not good, was not what he wanted.

Marcello: How do you account for this change in attitudes on the part of the Japanese? Do you attribute it to the character of the individuals who were in charge of this operation?

Taylor: Exactly! We attributed it to the fact that these men that we were under now--even though they were military men--were not in the war zone. There was no great bombings going on in Korea or up into Manchuria. They had bombed some there some and knocked out a factory. But we got out of Japan. These guards were not in the wartime situation, and their superiors were not pressing upon them to treat the prisoners badly, but rather to

treat them fairly. So we had good care. We rode up there on a passenger train.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what kind of train this was.

Taylor: Yes, compared to what we'd been on, you see, boxcars, we were now on a first class passenger train and two men to a seat. We had meals three times a day except for one day that the food was rejected by our doctor.

By the way, this doctor proved to be a great friend of the Americans. Even during the rest of the time when we were in Hoten Prison Camp in Muken, Manchuria, we were well cared for. He ran a first class hospital and did everything he could for these patients. He was just a good doctor. When the war was over, rather than see this doctor go to on into Russia with the other prisoners, which our leaders felt surely would go there, I was told--I can't say for sure--but I was told that they got this doctor out and brought him back. I'm not certain of that.

Marcello: How long did it take you to go from Pusan up to Hoten in Manchuria?

Taylor: Let's see. We left on the twenty-fifth of April. That took one day from . . . let's see, one day and a half, I guess. It took us about, I'd say, a day and . . . two days, something like that, because we left--I think

it was the twenty-fifth--and went into Fukuoka. The next morning would have been the twenty-sixth. We were in Manchuria early the twenty-ninth, so it took about two days to go from Fukuoka up there.

Marcello: Describe what this Hoten Prison Camp was like from a physical standpoint.

Taylor: Well, there was nothing elaborate about it. It was just a huge camp of very large concrete-type buildings which were heated with steam, you know. That was a cold country up there. We arrived there in April, and there was still ice on the ground the last of April. They'd had an awfully cold winter. But these buildings were substantial buildings, well-heated and everything. The prisoners who had been there all during the winter worked in the factories. They went all out to . . . you know, we were all just skin and bone. They looked very well. They'd had very good food. This was, we learned, the show camp for the International Red Cross. The Japanese had permitted the Red Cross to come in and inspect this camp. They'd furnished it with food and supplies and Red Cross supplies and equipment and such like that.

Marcello: Had you been issued winter clothing by this time?

Taylor: Yes, we were issued winter clothing partly in Moji in the hospital there. We had been issued some winter clothing. Then when we arrived at this Australian camp, we were re-issued heavier clothing. We took this clothing right along with us to Manchuria, so we were pretty well-clothed.

Marcello: What did you do after you got to Hoten Prison Camp? What sort of work were you doing?

Taylor: I performed chaplain functions. None of our people had to go out to work after we got there because we were in very poor shape. We were not there long. We were there from the last week of April until mid-August when the war was over. During this period of time, our sole job was to recuperate and get a little walking exercise. Our own fellow prisoners-of-war who had been there, as I say, took very good care of us. Little by little they gave us increased rations as they could. We had soybeans, and we had, oh, a lot of fish. We had plenty of fish. The Japanese provided that. The Japanese guards were very, very accommodating. We didn't have this hostility. We had no Japanese guards shooting guns around and threatening the prisoners or beating them up or anything like that. It was just a different atmosphere.

Marcello: This brings up an interesting question. Did you have any locally conscripted troops who were acting as guards at any time during your experience as a prisoner-of-war? I know that in some cases the Japanese actually used Koreans as guards, and in other cases they used Taiwanese.

Taylor: Well, we had Taiwanese and maybe some Koreans, too, but I don't think we had any Koreans. I know we had Taiwanese. Well, we had those in Cabanatuan who guarded us, you know. We had some on the ship who guarded us. So they were in the Japanese Army. Some of them didn't love the Japanese very much. That's true. Up there, though, in Manchuria, these were all Japanese--straight Japanese--because there was no love between the Japanese and the Chinese, you know. There may have been some soldiers from Taiwan up there, but I think they were all Japanese up there.

Marcello: How large a camp was this?

Taylor: Well, it wasn't too large. I think we had, as I recall, only about three to five hundred regular troops there when we got there, men who were working in the factories.

Marcello: Were these all American troops?

Taylor: No, there were British and a few Australians. Mostly British and maybe a few Dutch.

Marcello: What were your impressions of the British prisoners-of-war?

Taylor: Well, the British prisoners-of-war were very friendly in ways. But the British are different, you know. They're a colder type of fish than the Australians, for example. They're not as much . . . we are not as much like the British as the Australians are like we are, you know. The Australian people have this warmth of fellowship, and warmth of attitude, whereas the British is always a Britisher to the last degree. That's not speaking derogatorily against the British. It's just their way. It's easier to get along with the Australians than it is with the British. We used to say they were a cantankerous outfit because they were always bringing up the thought, "Well, the Americans didn't do it right. They didn't do it right. It wasn't done right and this and that." Other than that, they're alright. Some of my closest friends are British.

Marcello: What was their morale like?

Taylor: Very good. That's one thing you have to say about the British. I think we have inherited a great deal of that from the British. They have a tenacity. They have a capability of being strong and standing up for their country and standing up for what the country's doing and

being loyal to their country. They don't always object to what the king does or what Parliament does, but they're loyal to their country. This is good.

Marcello: By this time, are you making plans for your eventual liberation? Do you see that day somewhere off in the distance?

Taylor: Yes, we see it coming, we think, pretty soon now.

Marcello: Is it the sort of thing you talk about?

Taylor: Oh, yes. We talked about it and wondered just how long it would be because, you know, we could tell when we passed through Japan with all of these B-29's operating all over Japan that it just had to . . . something had to give. We figured it would be giving pretty soon. But it came sooner than we thought, really. We thought that Americans would very likely have to invade Japan. The moment that happened, we knew what would follow, we thought. The thing that happened that we didn't know about that brought the war to the end was the dropping of the atomic bomb.

Marcello: You never heard about it at all?

Taylor: No, we never heard about it. We didn't know about the atomic bomb until right at the last. Rumors began to come through that a bomb of such magnitude had been dropped and that 350,000 people were killed. We couldn't believe that at all until the Americans told us after we

were liberated. This brought, of course--all of us know--the war to a sudden stop.

Marcello: Something we haven't talked about in very much detail are rumors. Were rumors always running rampant through these camps?

Taylor: Rumors are something that never die. New rumors came up every day. This happened from the time we surrendered on Bataan when the rumor started that we were being taken into Manila to be put on ships to be repatriated. From that day on there were always rumors. There's something about rumors that are good under those circumstances. It helps to keep the morale and keep up the hopes of men.

Marcello: In other words, what you're saying is you believed most of these rumors.

Taylor: Yes. You can't help to believe them. They sounded good, you know. It's like these recipes we were talking about. There's just something about them that's good (laughter).

Marcello: What were some of the wilder rumors that you heard . . .

Taylor: And let me add another thing about rumors. Some people say, "Oh, you shouldn't start a rumor. It's such a letdown when people know that they're not true." Don't ever worry about that. By that time there'll be no rumors that'll keep your morale up (laughter). They're great, these rumors are, particularly when you're a prisoner-of-war.

Marcello: Now during this period when you perhaps see the possibility of liberation looming on the horizon, and I'm sure you also think about the possibility of the Japanese killing you. Were you hiding weapons? Were you accumulating weapons however primitive they might be?

Taylor: No. This will tell you something. In our prison camp up in Manchuria, Hoten, we had no reason to believe that the Japanese would kill us because of their attitude and everything. Of course, we never . . . I don't remember us ever talking about it, frankly, up there. But we never ruled out the possibility of anything happening. There could have been an order that came down in a flash from the higher headquarters saying, "Kill all of your prisoners-of-war." But we just didn't believe that would happen, and it didn't happen.

Marcello: Incidentally, what was your maximum weight, your peak weight, at the time you were captured or when you went in the service?

Taylor: About 170 pounds.

Marcello: And what was the minimum weight that you got down to as a prisoner?

Taylor: I don't really know how low I did get, but I know the first time I was weighed after coming out of the prison camp. I guess that was, oh, possibly on the ship in the Yellow Sea when the hospital ship picked us up in the middle of September.

I weighed ninety-seven pounds. I was still pretty shapely.

Marcello: And you had actually been living fairly well for a couple of months.

Taylor: Yes, I'd been recuperating and nourishment-wise had been eating better food since April, well, a little earlier than that. Yes, about the later part of March, something like that.

Marcello: So actually, your weight at its lowest was a great deal less than ninety-seven pounds or whatever it was at that time.

Taylor: Possibly eighty or eighty-five pounds or less.

Marcello: Okay, I think this more or less brings us up to the days immediately prior to the end of the war and then your eventual liberation itself. So why don't you just pick up the story at this point and discuss how you heard about the liberation and what your reaction was to it, and what the reaction of the Japanese was. I'll let you pick up the story.

Taylor: Well, I think I can best describe it by simply saying that there it was in August of 1945. Even though we received some news through the people who worked in the factory about the progress of the war, about the towns and cities of Japan being bombed and destroyed, we, by this stage, had decided that maybe the Americans would

have to invade Japan before any surrender came. So we were really not expecting anything sudden-like. On the fifteenth . . . I think it was around the fifteenth day . . . fourteenth day of August, maybe, or fifteenth, we looked out and saw these two or three large planes flying kind of in a circular pattern around the north side of the city of Mukden. At first we just thought it was the Japanese. Then later we saw parachutes coming out of those planes--men coming out. Of course, it was far enough where we couldn't see the men on them, but we could see the parachutes. About seven to ten parachutes opened.

Marcello: In other words, you don't know the war is over.

Taylor: No, the war . . . no, no. We don't know that at all yet. At first, we thought . . . the rumor got started that the Russians were invading, coming in from the north and west.

Marcello: Did you know that the Russians had entered the war?

Taylor: No, no, we didn't know it. They really hadn't . . . well, they entered about that time. But, anyway, these parachutes opened and came on down. Then these planes disappeared. I think there were two of them, if I remember correctly--big planes. Late that afternoon, then, we saw something that was most unusual. We saw seven or eight men coming into our prison camp and Japanese guards with them, but

the Japanese were carrying their parachutes. We put two and two together, and we said, "These are the men who parachuted out. Something has happened because a Japanese would not otherwise be carrying their parachutes."

So they came into the camp, and we sent spotters down to see what was going on. These troopers looked through the cracks of the buildings, and they came back and reported to us that the Japanese were serving these Americans. "They're Americans," they said, "Americans in uniform. They're serving tea to them." Then we knew.

We just knew the war was over. So we started celebrating in the camp. In previous nights we had to turn the lights out, say, at ten o'clock at night, and everybody had to be in bed. Previous nights, a guard would come around every thirty minutes. That night, no guards came. So we just . . . we didn't turn the lights out. We just sang and we told stories, and we conversed with each other. We did various things, you know, like that just waiting to see what General Parker . . . he was our commander of the camp, brigadier general. But we didn't hear a thing from him that night. So it went on through the night. A lot of us, I don't think, slept any at all. The next morning bright and early, General Parker came. He called us all together and said, "The war is over."

Marcello: What sort of emotional feelings went through you at this time?

Taylor: Oh, man, it went high! The emotions went very high. People . . . you could hear these camp boys parading and rejoicing all about the place, you know. It was a great day. There were only . . . there was an Australian chaplain and I who were the two active chaplains. Chaplain Duffy, who was the only surviving American chaplain from this detail, was with me, but he was still in the hospital. His name's in that book, I think.

We got with our camp commander. He said, "By all means, now let's have a big thanksgiving service." So we got together, set a time. I think it was for that afternoon about five o'clock. We had a camp-wide song fest and a big thanksgiving service over the victory.

The Japanese then came to us and said, "The war is over. We have guards around the camp. We have agreed with General Parker or General Parker has agreed with us that it'd be good if we maintain your security." For three or four days after that, until the Russians came in, the Japanese guards continued to serve at their posts, but guarding us against the Chinese or anybody else that might want to perpetrate . . . or come into

that camp for our protection. They advised us not to go into town because there was fighting in the streets of Mukden, you see, between the Japanese and the Chinese. So the Japanese prison guards protected us for three or four or five days until the Russians came in and formally liberated us. At that point, the Japanese guards all came into the camp in formation, and they went through a ceremony with the Russians and the Americans. They turned their guns over to General Parker and his American guards. Then the Japanese were marched off as prisoners. That was the end of it.

Marcello: You might describe the Russian liberators coming in.

Taylor: Well, the Russians came in and, man, they brought in their interpreter! He gave a speech to us about how wonderful and how glad they were to liberate us from these Japanese warmongers and pigs and, you know, people like that. The American prisoners-of-war grabbed him up on their shoulders did it in the American style. You know, they paraded around the grounds with him. From a formality viewpoint, the Russians liberated us but they got there after we were already free and everything, you know. But it was alright.

Then the Russians offered to do everything in the world they could for us. We were free, then, to go into

town. The Russians took over the guarding of all the town. So we went to Chinese homes at their invitation. For a number of days we remained there under the supervision of our own command with the protection of the Russian guards and so forth in the city and out until the Russians were able to build a road to the Yellow Sea. It was the eleventh of September, I believe it was, before we got out of there. We were there almost a month.

Marcello: Were you getting itchy in the meantime . . .

Taylor: Very.

Marcello: . . . to get out of there?

Taylor: You bet, yes. Well, at first we were in no big rush. But I'll tell you, we were glad when those trains rolled in to take us down to the Yellow Sea. We came to the Yellow Sea, and I remember that night we came in there by train, and we saw the lights on these hospital ships. There were one or two hospital ships out there. We were taken immediately to the ships and given hot showers, and the doctors took over and examined us. For two, three, or four days we were under examination. They clothed us and everything, and we started for the long trek back home.

Marcello: As you look back upon your experiences as a prisoner-of-war, what do you feel was the key to your survival?

Taylor: I think the key to my survival, of course, was the dominant, lasting, optimistic faith that I've been possessed of a long time. The other thing was that I was busy. My profession provided me an opportunity to be busy ministering to others and serving with others all the way through. We were very fortunate as chaplains, you know. The field was always ripe. There were always people to whom you could minister and serve. I think this was a great contributing factor to my survival.

Of course, there were rough times, but never once did I give up, you know, did I succumb to these temptations. A man could literally die if he wanted. If he just gave up, he could die. I've seen them die who just gave up, and they'd be dead in five minutes--just turn over and die. It was easy to do. But you have to keep your chin up and you have to look forward to live through such circumstances.

This was not because I was any better than anybody else or those of us who survived were any better. I think the key to all of it, though, was . . . of course, the providence of God, but in his good way we were able

to be optimistic and to keep on fighting, keep on pushing, keep on pulling, not only for yourself but for those about you. That's the key to it. I don't think I could have ever made it if I'd just been pulling to see that Preston Taylor got through. That's not the point at all.

It brings up the big question about what's life all about. It's not just for me or just for you. If we try to live it in that way for our own gratification, our own benefit, then we soon give up. If you get to thinking about, "Now, gee, there's no use me fighting this thing because I am not going to make it." But if you think there is a reason to fight because it might help somebody else to make it, you see, that's the key. I think that's a key to life, really.

Marcello: Well, Chaplain Taylor, I want to thank you for giving me your time to talk about your experiences. I think your comments have been most valuable, and I'm sure that when we get this transcribed and so on that scholars are going to find it most valuable. We hope it will serve as a supplement to your book.

Taylor: I think it will be . . . I hope it will be helpful to you, Ron, and it's been a great joy to have you down

here. I'm sorry today we didn't meet in my home. Millie and I enjoyed having you in our home. She laughs and tells everybody about breaking into your tape, you know, during the Aggie football game (chuckle).

Marcello: Tell her that I think I'm going to keep that on the tape.