

Interviewee: Marvin Roslansky

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Date of interview: 25 June 2004

Location: by telephone to Roslansky residence, Racine, WI

Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, August 2004

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, December 2004

Marvin Roslansky was born 11 November 1922, in Lakefield, Minnesota. He attended Lakefield schools and graduated from Lakefield High School in the spring of 1940.

Marvin entered the US Marine Corps spring of 1941, and in September 1941 was stationed on the Pacific island of Guam, a US territory. Japanese forces invaded Guam on 8 December 1941, and the badly outnumbered US forces surrendered two days later, on 10 December. Marvin was among the 406 American service personnel captured on the island.

After some weeks on Guam, in January 1942 prisoners were transported on the freighter *Argentina Maru* to Japan, and transferred to Zentsuji POW camp, located on Shikoku Island. Marvin remained at Zentsuji until the end of the war, some forty-five months. POWs were evacuated on 5 September 1945.

After leaving Zentsuji, Marvin was transported to Guam, to a Naval Hospital, and then by ship back to San Diego. He spent time at several military hospitals recovering from his years as a POW before being discharged from the Marine Corps in April 1946.

Again a civilian, Marvin was married in 1946 (wife Ida) and helped to raise four children. He used GI Bill benefits to attend welding school and auto frame school, and worked many years in the auto dismantling business in Racine, Wisconsin.

As of this writing (May 2016), Marvin lives in Racine.

Interview Key:

T = Thomas Saylor

M = Marvin Roslansky

[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation

(*) = words or phrase unclear**

NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is the 25 June 2004 and this is an interview for the Prisoner of War Oral History Project. My name is Thomas Saylor. Today I'm speaking with Mr. Marvin Roslansky of Racine, Wisconsin. First, on the record, thanks Mr. Roslansky, for taking time to speak with me today.

I'd like to start by entering some biographical information. You were born on the 11 November 1922, in Lakefield, Minnesota.

M: Right.

T: And that's in southwest Minnesota. You attended Lakefield schools and graduated from Lakefield High School in the spring of 1940. Entered the US Marine Corps spring of 1941 and in September of 1941 arrived at Javasan on the island of Guam. It was on the island of Guam that you experienced the beginning of the war in the Pacific. And I'm wondering to begin with if you can recall how you reacted when you heard that the Japanese had attacked US bases and that the war was now on.

M: We knew it. The first thing they told us when we got to Guam in September was that we were sitting on a keg of dynamite. Because the Japanese were only ninety miles from us on Saipan. I guess we had a premonition. But it was bad when it happened.

T: Does that mean that you weren't exactly surprised when hostilities actually began?

M: We were waiting for it. That part of it. To be truthful. We knew this was going to happen. They took all the civilians off of Guam in September. All but one lady. She was pregnant and they kept her there. She had her baby there.

T: So the rest of the people on Guam were all military people.

M: Either military or natives.

T: As far as the Americans on the island. How soon was it after the hostilities began that the Japanese bombed or attacked Guam?

M: *(inaudible)*

T: And how did you experience the Japanese attack on Guam personally?

M: They bombed us. We just let it happen. It was all you could do. But it only lasted two days. They bombed...I was on the outstation barracks. I was in Agana when the bombing starting. But they probably bombed us almost the same time as Hawaii or shortly after. Of course, our communications were gone right away.

T: And it was pretty soon that the Japanese actually landed on the island, right?

M: December 9 in the morning. Early in the morning. Three o'clock.

T: From your perspective, how did you experience that? How did that transpire?

M: Oh, my God! (*chuckles*) There's nothing you can do. You just... You're at their mercy.

T: Was there a sense of hopelessness then? I mean, you sound pretty resigned when you describe it like that.

M: Yes. But I guess you don't give up hope. What are they going to do? We didn't know those people.

T: Were you captured together with a lot of other men?

M: Yes. Quite a number were in Agana at that time. They called them all together into...by the government building.

T: What was that for you? Can you describe what it was like to actually have the Japanese really in front of you as your captors at that point?

M: You just keep wondering what's going to happen next. They had us all lined up. Machine guns in front of the whole works. In fact, one fellow about two positions to my right, we didn't understand Japanese. The Jap told him to take his clothes off or something. The guy moved backward instead, so he bayoneted him right there.

T: So literally almost right in front of you.

M: Absolutely. Yes.

T: Do you recall a sense of fear on your part...

M: Absolutely! You've got no other choice at that time. What do we do now? And you can't understand those people. Had one or two interpreters, but that would not go too far with the whole group.

T: At that point did you have any kind of what we might call interrogation or questioning by the Japanese?

M: No. No.

T: Were you ever interrogated or questioned? Individually?

M: Not too much. They probably interrogated our commanding officers more than they did us at that particular time.

T: And what was your rank at this time?

M: I was a private.

T: So if they were looking for information they probably aren't going to the privates, are they?

M: Right.

T: You stayed on Guam for a number of weeks there before they moved you out, right?

M: January 15.

T: So it was less than a month or just about a month I guess, right?

M: About a month. Yes.

T: What happened during that month?

M: During that month? During that month they had...show off all their equipment and stuff. We were all really confined, and no food. In fact, in those thirty days as many people never even had bowel movements. Our doctor told us, don't worry because your body would burn it up. But it worried you. The Japanese did not...were not used to our habits. And we had destroyed almost everything we had on the island. At that time. Supplies. What we didn't destroy was refrigeration and stuff, and they knew nothing about that.

T: In a sense, it's a holding pattern. You're not being taken anywhere.

M: No. What's next?

T: Among the men, did you discuss among yourselves wondering what was going to happen next?

M: We were so sure that our military people would come and get us that we thought that it would be short. We did not know how bad the damage was to Hawaii.

(1, A, 70)

T: I see. So the conversations you remember, are men thinking that the American forces will be back to get you pretty soon.

M: Right. I guess we lived with that from day to day for [the next] four years.

T: Believing that you're going to be rescued soon or...

M: Rescued. Right.

T: Now how long did that sense of optimism last? I mean, you were a POW for nearly four years.

M: Until September 16, 1945.

T: The sense of optimism.

M: Yes.

T: Had you given any...I mean, as of 9 December you're a prisoner of war. Had you given much thought before that time to what it would be like to be a prisoner of war?

M: We knew nothing about it. We were not trained that way. We had no idea. I guess it never entered anybody's mind. What a prisoner of war was. Because we were the first.

T: As a combat soldier, or once the war begins there are, bluntly, only a couple of options. Either you fight and are unscathed, you're wounded, you're killed, or you're captured. Did you find yourself kind of considering those options as far as what might happen to you?

M: Oh, absolutely, but I mean as far as any combat, we had .45 caliber pistols and one clip of ammunition. Forget that part of it.

T: That was how you were armed?

M: That's all I had. Yes. And what we did, we dismantled those pistols and threw them in the fishpond.

T: So you didn't have a lot of weapons at your disposal to fight the Japanese anyway.

M: No. Not at all. We weren't prepared to do that [fight the Japanese] whatsoever. We were like a governing force.

T: I see. So you saw yourself really as less combat-ready troops and more of a police force in a way?

M: Right. As far as we were concerned we were let down by our own government because we felt...they knew why we were out there and the only way that we could be saved is if they got us. Picked us up.

T: During that month or so that you spent on Guam, did men come and go or was the group that you were captured with all kept together there?

M: We had two groups. But as far as men coming and going, there were a few groups, it took four or five days to get them in. In fact, we had a couple patrolmen that were out in Agate and in a couple of the other stations that came in late. The Japanese brought them in. But in some cases, if they caught them after the surrender, they were killed.

T: How much interaction did you have with the Japanese while you were kept there at Guam?

M: None. Only through our commanding officers.

T: So for you as the individual enlisted soldier, you really didn't interact with the Japanese at all?

M: Not at all. No. They just stood guard at us. That's all. We couldn't talk their language. They couldn't talk ours.

T: Did they come into the—I think you said you were held in a church, is that right?

(1, A, 107)

M: In a Catholic church. Right.

T: Did they come in there to search the place or did you see them coming through that building at all?

M: I don't remember that. I don't remember that. It was confined quarters. Nothing could happen. Certainly they were watching all the time. We had what is called insular guard quarters also. Had somebody in there.

T: But limited contact to the Japanese if at all.

M: Probably not whatsoever.

T: Was there any kind of...were there work details here or anything to do or were you essentially just held in the church?

M: We were just held in the church.

T: What kind of discussions or rumors were there among the men, that you recall, about what was going to happen?

M: Anything at that time would be just thinking because we had no idea what was going to happen. You just sit back and wait. We had no communications. No nothing at that time.

T: Any news? Was there any news of what was going on outside of your own location?

M: In that first month?

T: Yes.

M: No. Because the communications were gone.

T: So in a sense, you had to sort of...you could either dream up your own ideas, your own rumors, or just sit and wait.

M: Right.

T: Well, you waited about a month or a little more and were then transported to Japan aboard the ship *Argentina Maru*.

M: Right.

T: Mr. Roslansky, how many men, of the men you were captive with there, how many were actually put on board that ship bound for Japan?

M: Oh, I'm not...there were 147 Marines. Maybe about two hundred sailors. That's about 350. The entire group were on that ship. And some civilians. Now, I don't know the numbers there.

T: But you would say that all the men that were captured at Guam, for example that you were with in quarters there, were put on board the ship for Japan.

M: Right.

T: So it sounds like the way you describe it, the Japanese emptied out the garrison of Guam regardless of service branch or rank and people were put on board the ship and sent to Japan.

M: Yes. That didn't make any difference. You were all one.

T: So they didn't just take some people for this ship for Japan. They took everybody. All the service personnel.

M: To my knowledge...of course, there was one man stayed there. He was not captured. But I do believe that everybody that was captured was on the *Argentina Maru* that morning.

T: Now in your own account you do talk a bit about the *Argentina Maru*. The time on there. But I would like to go into some detail about that if possible. When you got on board the ship, how many different...were all the men in one hold or one area, or were there several different ones?

M: No. They had us all down in one hold.

T: So all the men were put down into one hold.

M: I'm almost sure of that.

T: As you, for someone reading or listening to this, if you sort of close your eyes and can you describe the interior of the hold in which you were kept?

M: It was just a...we had bunks we slept in at night.

T: On board the ship.

M: They were six high, something like that. But there was nothing. They had a latrine we had to go to. We went up in different groups for air once in a while. They let us up for that. But it was strong supervision. That whole bit there. That was only about, what, five days, from the time we left Guam until we got to Japan. But it was in the middle of January. We were all in shorts and tropical clothing, and we get to Japan in the middle of winter.

T: I see. So you weren't, you surely weren't dressed for the weather once you got to Japan.

M: No. I see in one of the pictures I sent you they must have issued us blankets. We wrapped ourselves in a blanket.

T: On board the ship there, what kind of conditions were in the hold? Can you describe those as far as what you lived in from day to day?

M: It was just a hold. Your bunks were there and the latrines were just off the side. There was really nothing. The *Argentina Maru* was a luxury liner, and they had just captured it and the army took it over. So we were probably the first people that used that ship when the war started. They took it to Japan. I don't know where it was before. When the army took it over. What position. I've never heard that one.

T: What kind of food and water was supplied to you down in the hold there?

M: We had rice and then I forget how we got our water. We had some water.

T: Among the prisoners as you were down there, different service branches, different ranks, who kept order, in a sense, down there among the prisoners? Or was there any order kept?

M: We were pretty good about keeping ourselves under control although, yes, we had our honchos. You had your commissioned officers. I forget how the Japanese picked them. They picked one guy there and then one of...a chief bos'n had pretty much charge of us. That was the communication between the Japanese and us.

T: As an intermediary, in a sense.

M: Right.

T: Among the prisoners, was there...did things stay pretty organized as far as people...

M: I've got to say we stayed pretty organized. Yes. Everybody was in the position. What are you going to do? There's nothing you could do.

T: And luckily, in a sense, this is only five days on board the ship, right?

M: Right.

T: Now you mentioned you moved from a tropical climate on Guam in December-January, to Japan where the weather was quite different. Describe the weather there on Shikoku when you got off the ship.

M: It was the middle of a really bad windstorm. Trying to get off of the *Argentina Maru* and into the ferry boat...went down rope ladders and got onto it, but it bounced around until we got onto the ferry and then the ferry took us onto Takamatsu.

(1, A, 188)

T: Where had the ship landed? Was it at Takamatsu there? In the harbor?

M: On the harbor on Shikoku they couldn't get it in close enough. They used a ferry to come in. Outside of Shikoku Island.

T: That ship was pretty large, wasn't it?

M: The *Argentina*? Yes. You know, the *Argentina Maru*, the Japanese made an aircraft carrier out of it. But we sunk it.

T: That's right. They did.

M: That's how large it was.

T: Yes.

M: In October, I think, of '44.

T: So you were just, as the POWs, you were simply in a small hold of what was a much larger ship.

M: Just transportation. Just being transported. Right.

T: For you, what was the most difficult part of that five day journey on board the ship?

M: When you get to Japan. We knew where we were going.

T: You knew you were headed for Japan?

M: Yes.

T: Was there, when you thought about going to Japan, I mean, here's a place that...you hadn't been to Japan before had you?

M: Me? I was nineteen years old. I hadn't been off the farm.

T: So what did it...when the rumor or the news came around that we're going to Japan, what did that mean to your mind? How did you...what did you think about, oh, we're going to Japan. What did that mean to you?

M: Really nothing, other than the fact that that was our next destination.

T: Were you apprehensive about going to Japan, or did it seem to be just better than being on Guam or...

M: Probably were apprehensive. Absolutely. But I mean, we had no choice. None whatsoever.

T: When you landed there at Takamatsu, got onto Japanese soil, what happened to you then? Here you've sort of been pulled off of an ocean liner after five days in the hold. What happened to you next?

M: They took us to Zentsuji. We had to march. They have narrow gauge trains there, and that little trip from Takamatsu to Zentsuji was on a train.

T: So you went those miles not on foot.

M: No. I'm not positive, but I'm sure we did that by train. It was late at night. That was really... We got in there late at night. I forget...it was early in the morning they took us off. I don't quite remember just what time it was there.

T: So you waited on board the ship for some time before actually leaving.

M: Right.

(1, A, 225)

T: When it was sunlight there in Japan, do you remember what kind of first impressions that place made on you as a young man off the farm?

M: Actually we were probably about the same latitude as Kansas City. It was wintertime. That was not new to us. As far as myself from Minnesota.

T: Right. I suppose for some of the other guys, maybe.

M: That could be, but I don't know where they were all from. From the States.

T: Now were you issued winter appropriate clothing?

M: I don't know at what time. I see a picture. We have blankets that we were issued. Japanese jackets and shoes or stuff like that. All army stuff.

T: Now, when did you start keeping your diary entries?

M: I lost the first two copies, so I don't know when I—all I've got left is the one from 1943. I lost the earlier ones.

T: What prompted you to, whenever you started, what prompted you to keep diary entries?

M: To start with I probably couldn't have. To start with we didn't have any paper, pencils or anything to work with. Some officers did. I've read somewhere they kept a pretty good listing on it. Secondly, I'm sure that through history and through the Japanese notations, a lot of it came out. The Japanese, I guess, did keep track of us. You can find what happened to us in camp but very few people have ever found that part of it out. You need their help in stuff like that. Because we were weighed and stuff. They kept track of that part of it.

T: Why did you keep a diary?

M: I kind of figured I want to know what happened.

T: Where did you find the paper and writing implements then?

M: We had little commissaries where we could buy the stuff. We worked...first we worked in Osiana, on the mountain. In fact, I've still got that one notebook. It's still Japanese. Bound notebook. Seven by nine [inches] or something like that.

T: So you were able to literally just acquire the stuff. Illegally or legally?

M: That was legally.

T: So you had the notebook. Were you a person who as a young person or a child had done diaries before?

M: I don't remember that. Remember that I'm right out of high school...my mother was good about doing stuff like that also. So I guess that's like what happened.

T: Now, you look at your own diary, the surviving volume that you have. What kind of things was Marvin Roslansky writing down?

M: Probably the most important thing was the number of days I'd been there, and hoping that I would get back out. Your optimism. I used to keep track of the days we were there. How many days we were going to be there yet. Then first one Christmas. Then the next Christmas. Well, we'll be home the next Christmas. But it never happened.

T: Did you, in your own diary entries, did you count the days?

M: Did I count the days?

T: Yes.

M: Not the days I was at camp. I kept track of payroll.

T: So that's one of the important things that you wanted to note.

M: Yes.

T: What other kind of things did you...because the way you've described in your own writing, the work was pretty constant as far as what you were doing and how much of it you were doing.

M: Yes. We worked about ten hours a day. After we went off of Osiamia. We did start doing stevedore work. We would haul grain. All freight supplies from freight cars to the storage or vice versa. Our heaviest was we carried one hundred kilo. Two hundred twenty-five pounds.

T: In your diary then, did you write down the kind of work you were doing or was that something you didn't bother to write down?

M: I didn't write much of that down. I worked in the galley for a while. I've got a note of that. But other than day to day labor, no. Not at all.

T: So when you scan, when you look at what you wrote down, what kind of things were important to you when you were there? Important enough to write down.

M: The length of time I'd been there and probably the hope of getting back home. That was always there.

T: So those were things that you found yourself writing about more than once.

M: Absolutely. Yes. And of course our diet, what we were fed every day.

T: Was there much...did you write down even when it was the same, or when it was just different from the usual?

M: When it was different also.

T: You mentioned you acquired the diaries or the notebooks legally at the beginning, but you also said that later in the war it became dangerous. In fact, so dangerous that you stopped making entries and hid the diaries.

M: Right.

T: What happened in the meantime? It seems like there was a change from being able to legally buy the notebooks to having to hide the notebooks.

M: It got to where they watched us so close that you were afraid. When it comes to an infraction, whatever they might do to you, it could be from losing your head to getting a good beating. So you just eliminate that part of it.

T: So the diary was something that you felt was a risk and so you hid them away.

M: It did become a risk. Absolutely. If they caught me writing...

T: Was that something the Japanese stated, that no more diaries or we don't want to see that, or did you sort of figure that out?

M: Not no more diaries. The discipline was difficult. All the way through really. Even in keeping a diary earlier, I'm sure if they knew I had it, it wouldn't be here.

T: I see. But they were more...the treatment changed to the point at the end where you feared it being found out.

M: Right.

T: Let me move and ask about the kind of work you were doing. In the statement that you sent me in the mail, it looks like you had basically two work experiences. The first was agricultural, I guess we can say?

M: Yes. On Osima. We did terracing. We'd go up and take the stones off the mountain, off the side for a distance. Maybe twenty feet and then build a wall. Let's say for agricultural purposes.

(1, A, 339)

T: Now were...did all the prisoners go out to this kind of labor every day or only some people?

M: Only—when you say only some—all of the noncoms. The commissioned officers didn't go.

T: So you as an enlisted person went out to work.

M: Right.

T: And other enlisted personnel and noncommissioned officers as well?

M: Right. Except a couple that might...some of our leaders might have stayed back. I don't know that part. There were very few. Everybody went up there.

T: Describe that kind of work. You mentioned lifting rocks. Were the men collected in the morning and did you go out as a group?

M: We went as a full group up the mountain. We took our lunch with us. Some soup and rice. Whatever it should be.

T: How were you dressed for this kind of work? I mean, the temperature is changing, getting toward spring and summer. What kind of clothes did you wear to go to work?

M: It was pretty much summer clothes at that time. Early. But then we wore our jackets and stuff for the wintertime. We spent one winter up there.

T: The first winter you were there, right?

M: Sure. No. Well, the first full winter. Put it that way. Because we got there in January of '42. We didn't do anything for a short while, until later on.

T: This agricultural work now. Was that simply a matter of clearing stones, or did you do other kind of work as well as part of that?

M: No. All we did was clear stones. We didn't do any planting or anything like that. What happened to the ground once we left...I suppose the civilians took care of that.

T: The Japanese farmers.

M: Yes.

End of Tape 1, Side A. Side B begins at counter 380.

M: ...we had a little pickaxe thing that we used. In fact, clearing land.

T: Was this...now having grown up on a farm, was this something that you found easy to get used to?

M: It was easy to get used to. Right. I really was born in town, but I did a little farming.

T: Were there Japanese guards there watching? That is, around you as you were doing this kind of work?

M: Oh, yes. We had a goal. In other words, they put stakes. You have to go this far today. Hai ako. Hai ako. That means hurry! Hurry!

T: So you had Japanese guards there, sort of closely monitoring what you were doing and how you were doing it.

M: Right.

T: Now did they sort of show you what to do, or you figured it out, or...

M: As I said, they would put a stake. So we knew what we had to do. We had to get the rocks out and get to that stake. Sometimes if we got to the stake we got off a little early. Very seldom that happened. It was far enough ahead.

T: How many days a week did you go out to work?

M: Oh, Lord. I don't remember that. I'm not going to say that.

T: Put it another way. Do you remember having days off? Where you didn't go to work.

M: We did have a day off once in a while to wash our clothes and stuff like that.

T: But you wouldn't go so far as to say you remember a regular day off.

M: No. No regular day off.

T: You were kept at the compound at Zentsuji. Did you stay the same place the whole time or did you move?

M: I was at the same place. Right.

T: Let me ask you about the place then. What kind of barracks or housing did they have for the men?

M: They were army barracks and they had an aisle down the center. We had fourteen beds on either side. Like you divide the room into quarters. There were seven on one side and seven on the other side with the fourteen on the opposite hallway. There were windows, but only the one exit or entrance on either end of the building. There was no heat.

T: How many stories? Was it a one story building?

M: No. Two story building.

T: Two story building.

M: I was on the bottom. I'm not going to say for sure. I think there was a stairway going up. I know there was because the pictures show it. Windows upstairs.

T: So your best recollection is that it was two stories, but you were on the ground floor. All the men kept in the buildings were Allied POWs?

M: Yes. British, Australian, American, Canadian.

T: Any of the kind of prisoners or civilians kept with you.

M: I don't think that. Yes, it was a two story building. I see a picture of it.

T: Now the bunks that you had. How many men to a bunk?

M: There were seven men on the platform. The platform was probably eighteen inches off the ground. We had twenty-two inch width.

T: For the individual person.

M: Yes. And probably seven foot, six, seven foot deep.

T: So it's a...

M: Wooden platform.

T: It's tight quarters as far as sleeping.

M: Right.

T: You mentioned no heat in the building either, that you recall.

M: When we first got there we had hibachis. They put a hibachi in the middle. That was charcoal burners. But we did not get that the second winter.

T: So you had it once and not again.

M: Not again.

(1, B, 420)

T: So the other winters you were there, 1942-43 and 1943-44 and 1944-45 you don't recall any heat.

M: There was no heat. No.

T: In general, how was the weather during the winter there at your location?

M: I would suspect we probably had an average of around twenty degrees. We had snow, rain, ice. Not a real bad blizzard-type weather. It was on the inland sea, so there was a lot of moisture from there.

T: So compared to a southwest Minnesota winter it was not that cold or snowy, but it was definitely winter.

M: Right.

T: Were you issued other clothing for winter?

M: We had a jacket.

T: Gloves, hat?

M: I don't ever remember having gloves. We had a hat.

T: In the barracks there you mentioned the sleeping platforms, these two story buildings, a lack of heat after the first winter. How about the food that you received? Now, you went out to work during the day. Did you have a meal before you left in the morning?

M: We had a meal before we left. Right. And we carried our lunch, and when we came in we had a meal.

T: Was the food generally consistent, Mr. Roslansky? I mean getting the same thing every day?

M: Soup and rice.

T: And for example, to describe in the morning before you left, what was the morning meal?

M: I'd say soup. We had rice, but usually it was a mesa-type thing. Not the real rice. It was kind of a pink thing. And the soup would be...you know, either daikons or seaweed soup or something just to take up the water base. A lot of daikon. Because daikons—you know, it's that long white radish.

T: Daikon radish. And what did you take with you as far as the...you said you took food with you when you went to work.

M: We took our soup and rice with us. We were able to warm the soup up at noon.

T: What kind of containers...you must have had containers to take soup with you?

M: Yes. Again, I don't remember for sure what we used there. But we did take it with us.

T: From the best of your recollection, was the stuff you took, taking soup, was each individual person had their own soup with them or was it a larger pot that you shared?

M: It all went into a larger pot.

T: So then you divvied it out at mealtime.

M: Right.

T: And you mentioned an evening meal when you got back from work. Was that similar to what you'd had?

M: It was the same thing three times a day.

T: So there was very little variety as far as the meals. In your diary entries do you note any time when you did get different things to eat?

(1, B, 450)

M: Yes. In fact, it will be in there. Especially I think in June of '42 Red Cross boxes had come in, but we did not get them until December of that year. But the Japanese would take the sardines, the corned beef, and stuff like that out and we would add that to the soup.

T: Now you mentioned Red Cross packages. How often do you remember getting those?

M: I would suspect that we only probably got a full box about three times.

T: In the whole time you were there. Do you, when you got those, were those shared or did you have one to yourself?

M: One or two occasions we had our own, and I see where we shared them with six people. I don't know. I would suspect that it was always the same group of boxes that came in the first place. They warehoused them. At the warehouse they got ancient. Stuff would spoil. Especially the cheese and stuff like that.

T: So that indicates that they were holding onto those things for quite a while before you actually saw them.

M: Oh! They probably had some when we left. You talk about holding onto stuff. In 1923 they had an earthquake. A bad one. And our Red Cross helped them. I helped build some warehouses in 1944 or '45. They still had some of that stuff in them.

T: From twenty years earlier?

M: Yes. They stored it all.

T: So the fact that you didn't get your packages right away was in keeping with the character, it sounds like.

M: Right.

T: Now the food, you mention in your own summary that you lost a lot of weight over there. Was food one of those things that you could supplement in other ways besides what the Japanese provided for you?

M: Yes. On the docks we would steal what we could. Rice and stuff like that. Grains or whatever was handling that day. Salt, sugar, whatever. But we tried to make sure that our officers were taken care of too, because they didn't work, so they didn't get hardly anything to eat. I think we were at about six hundred grams. They might have been down to three hundred, three fifty.

T: So not going to work was not necessarily an advantage for your officers.

M: Oh, absolutely. No. No. Right. If you had 102 fever or more you stayed back, but your ration was cut too.

T: So the incentive was to go to work.

M: Oh, absolutely. And going to work we could, at the risk of your own life, try to get a hold of what we could and get it back.

T: Sure. Did you come into contact at all, this is on food subject, did you come into contact at all with Japanese civilians?

M: Yes. Our honchos at the docks were Japanese. We had our Japanese guards, but we worked for some type of a Japanese organization where—they're freight handlers.

T: Did you walk to work every day from between the camp and Takamatsu?

M: Oh, no. We took a train.

T: Were you the only ones on the train or were there civilians there too?

M: We were the only ones on our car.

T: So they kept you, it sounds like, pretty separate from the civilians.

M: Oh, yes. We were not, never...on the docks we worked with them, but otherwise absolutely there were no civilians around us. In fact, I think we were better off without civilians around us.

(1, B, 491)

T: What do you mean by that?

M: They were not happy with their own army I don't think. We probably had that little advantage. We lived an army life not a civilian life.

T: Describe what you mean by that.

M: The civilians, I mean the army took everything from the civilians, whatever they were. Their crops and all that stuff. That was all taken up by the army I'm sure. I'm sure they had no control. What was happening there.

T: With the civilians that you did come into contact with, the people you worked with or for at that docks, was it possible to supplement your food by bargaining at all with them?

M: I'm going to say no. Some of them managed to do it a little bit but...because they didn't have food.

T: So the food that you got from the Japanese in camp could be supplemented by what you could pilfer or steal from what you were loading and unloading.

M: At times.

T: At times. Otherwise you were on your own.

M: Right.

T: Did you have, on the subject of food, any kind of garden plot or the ability to grow anything around your camp?

M: Yes. The officers had a garden they worked. In fact, I noticed in my diary towards the end there in '44 that might have been the only fresh vegetables we had. What they got out of that garden plot.

T: Was the stuff from the garden plot shared with all the men? I mean, you were working. They were tending the garden. Was that stuff shared?

M: Yes. After the Japanese took their share.

T: So they took some of the stuff you grew.

M: *(chuckles)* I guess they raised rabbits and stuff. But they made sure they got their share out of it first.

T: So food sounds like it was a constant focus of attention.

M: It was. Everybody...like for vitamin deficiencies, there was no food value to the food we got from them.

T: The rice and the radishes and the soup and stuff. With the focus on food like that, did that sort of influence your conversations or what you did in your spare time?

M: Part of the time. Yes. What are we going to eat when we get back home? You never give up the idea that we're going to get back home and enjoy a real life.

T: And when you found yourself talking about home, food was one of the subjects that came up?

M: Food would always come up.

T: So not just sometimes. Let me ask about the kind of work that you did as a stevedore. You alluded to it a moment ago. This is the work that you did the majority of the time that you were at Zentsuji, right?

M: Zentsuji, yes. We worked at Takamatsu and at Hokkadi. There were two towns. We had people that went out of camp. They went back to the mainland. They worked in other places.

(1, B, 529)

T: Did they come back to your camp then at night or did they leave...

M: No. No. They worked on the mainland. They were gone.

T: When did they leave?

M: I can't tell you, because they went different times. I've got notes in my diary of when they left.

T: So from time to time men were selected out of the group and sent elsewhere.

M: Right.

T: Was that something that the Japanese chose who was going or did you have any kind of way of picking yourself into a group like that?

M: You didn't know.

T: So how did that happen? Describe how that happened. Did they come in and just simply pick people out and they were gone?

M: Right.

T: Was that something that then, you as an individual, did you worry or were you apprehensive about being selected out some day or not really?

M: Not really. I mean, it was just part of being a prisoner of war. You did what they told you to.

T: Were there any rumors about the people that were selected out? Where they were going? Whether they were going to something better or worse than where you were at?

M: Probably from time to time we were told, but not always. We did not know where they went once they left us.

T: Because you never heard from them again.

M: No. No. I think there was only about 116 of us left there anyhow during '45.

T: That's less than half the amount you said went there to begin with.

M: Yes. That's noncommissioned men. We had an awful lot of commissioned officers from the Philippines with us and from the English islands and stuff like that later on.

T: At Zentsuji there.

M: Yes. It was a big camp at one time.

T: So the Guam men, if we can call them that, that were at Zentsuji were ultimately part of a larger group of prisoners from other locations too.

M: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

T: In the quarters there, you've talked about kind of the sleeping and the food and all that. About the Japanese themselves. The guards there and the treatment you got from the Japanese. I wanted to ask about that. Did the guards change over time or did you see the same people pretty consistently?

M: [The guards changed] pretty consistently. They changed from time to time, but you always had the same...later on we had army guards. But then they changed to civilians later in our stay there. I don't quite remember when that changed. Under army supervision.

We had roll call every morning, every night. And then you had your special roll call through the night. They'd get everybody up. We were full of bedbugs and fleas.

T: How about these roll calls? Describe a typical roll call. Like in the morning. How did that work?

M: Everybody stood at the head of the bunk and you counted off in Japanese.

T: The roll call was inside.

(1, B, 570)

M: Inside.

T: So you stood at your bunk and you had to count off.

M: Up to fourteen.

T: Up to fourteen. It sounds like you had to know the Japanese numbers from one to fourteen.

M: *Ichi, nei, san, ...yes.*

T: You still know those. So depending on where you were in line you had to know what number to call out.

M: Right.

T: And the same kind of roll call at night.

M: Same kind at night.

T: The Japanese guards. I'm curious about the kind of treatment that you received from the guards. How would you describe that?

M: That was up to them. If they felt you were doing something wrong, they'd straighten you out.

T: And what do you mean by that? Straighten you out.

M: Either beat on you or whatever should be to show their power. They didn't need much excuse once in a while.

T: Was the treatment from the Japanese guards predictable? I mean, if you do something wrong then this will happen? Or was it, from your perspective, more unpredictable?

M: Unpredictable. You would never know. You might get beat for doing nothing.

T: So the behavior...then did different guards treat prisoners different ways?

M: Some of our guards were really tougher than others. I, of course I get prejudiced, but we had what we called the Nisei, the ones that were born in America and educated in America and so forth. They kind of felt that they were real superior.

T: So they spoke English.

M: They spoke English.

T: Is there a guard for example, one of those Nisei, that you remember by name? Somebody that you could describe?

M: Club Fist and what was all the names? We had about five or six different names. As far as describing, Club Fist, he evidently had been in the service in China. His hand was damaged.

T: So he was a soldier or former soldier.

M: Right.

T: Was he Nisei himself?

M: He wasn't Nisei. No. No.

T: And this Club Fist, what kind of a person was he?

M: He would beat you for nothing. You didn't have to do too much wrong. Yes. Of course, they did that with their own people. Their own soldiers. One infraction. They'd beat each other up.

T: This is the kind of treatment that as prisoners you could expect as well.

M: Right. You never...they're unpredictable people. We had no idea what they might do.

(1, B, 609)

T: Was there a time when you suffered physical abuse at the hands of the Japanese?

M: I did. Right.

T: Describe a time that that happened and why it happened.

M: Only one time I can really tell you. The reason I was in the brig for a couple days [was] for smoking in the wrong place. You got beat for that. When you went in and when you went back out.

T: Of the brig.

M: But even during your work periods. If you're working, they'd come up and club you. That didn't make any difference. You just keep on moving faster, faster.

T: So it could happen even while you were working, for no apparent reason it sounds like.

M: No apparent reason. Right.

T: Now, the Nisei guards, were they any different as far as the treatment you could expect from them? Let's face it, you could talk to them, right?

M: Yes. But they had a complex that we didn't care for.

T: What do you mean by that? And why was that? What was different about them?

M: Because you never knew for sure what they were going to tell their superiors.

T: Because they could understand what you were saying.

M: Right.

T: Now the typical Japanese, the native Japanese guards that typically didn't speak English?

M: No. In fact, we probably spoke more Japanese than they did English. Put it this way, we got along better if we talked Japanese.

T: Do you feel the Nisei guards were listening to you in a way?

M: Well...

T: I mean, as far as maybe like, I don't know, spying, but kind of over...

M: This is right. Right. But even prior to the war, even like on Guam we had Japanese civilians we thought a lot of. We found out later on that they were planted there for a purpose.

T: Really?

M: Oh, yes.

T: Did you observe, as far as the treatment, the guards' treatment of prisoners, did you observe other prisoners being abused by the guards as well?

M: Right.

T: When you observed things like that, what typically was that for?

M: What was it for?

T: Yes. What kind of things...

M: Sometimes if a fellow got caught stealing, or something like that. This stealing things and trying to provide for yourself, you took a chance whenever you did it.

T: And you knew that, right?

M: We knew it. And you might as well leave them be rather than the alternative.

(1, B, 646)

T: So every time that you tried to take a little piece of food or something from what you were doing, the risk was that the Japanese would see you.

M: Yes. If they saw you, you'd be in trouble. We had our ways.

T: What do you mean by that? When you had your ways. How did you manage that?

M: Try to protect, hide, whatever we had. You'd hide it in your pants. We had little tubes. We'd let the grain go from...we carried this grain sometimes as much as maybe one hundred, two hundred feet. On planks.

T: So you were carrying sacks of grain. So although you were carrying food or foodstuff that wasn't always possible to take some of them out. Take parts of it.

M: We had different ways of doing it. Right.

T: How would you typically do that? I mean, if you were carrying sugar or grain. How might you attempt to take a portion or take some out?

M: We had a way of draining from the sacks into our trousers. Used tubes. Or even your hands. You could dig some out.

T: And sort of, on the sly take some or pull some out and put it...where in your clothes would you put it?

M: We filled our trousers so we could hide it.

T: So you had a way of...

M: Right. Also we had a hood. Always had a hood over your shoulder to carry stuff on.

T: So it was possible sometimes, it sounds like, to take extra.

M: It was possible. Right. One time salt was...in fact, I got a note in my diary where four people went to the brig for stealing salt. That night kind of comes to me. We had roll call. The Jap guards were taking a roll call and one guy sees some white crystals on the bunk by one guy. He took his hand and picked it up and stuck it in his mouth. It was calcium. We hauled calcium that day. He was not happy.

T: So the Japanese, it sounds like they suspected or knew men were taking stuff.

M: They knew. Yes.

T: Among the prisoners...you must have seen the same guys or worked with the same guys day after day.

M: Right.

T: And the guys in your barracks, did the population change very much in there or was it much the same guys?

M: In my particular barracks I had the same two guys next to me I think almost all the time. It didn't change that much. What happened when they sent the group of 150 out, there would just be empty bunks.

T: So they would take whole bunks.

M: Right. Right. Because those men were never replaced in our camp.

T: So from one day to the next they were gone.

M: Right.

T: Did you make, in the camp there, did you make what we might call close friends among any prisoners?

M: Oh, absolutely. In fact, I kind of feel proud of the prisoners we had. We really got along pretty good. They'd have little arguments once in a while, but really got along and made sure we watched out for each other. You didn't have to be worried about your buddy.

(1, B, 703)

T: Who would you consider your best friends in camp?

M: Oh, Bill Pope. A. W. Jones. Red Tailor. Law. Quite a number.

T: Now, are any of these guys part of the Marine contingent on Guam that you knew before Zentsuji? Or are these guys you met in camp?

M: I didn't know any of them before Zentsuji. Even before I got to Guam.

T: So these were guys that you met as a POW.

M: On Guam and as POWs. Right.

T: The kind of guys that you mentioned as your close friends, what was it that made you close friends? I mean, there were a lot of guys, and yet these guys were your friends. How come these guys?

M: Probably you just had more conversation between us. We were all friends. I don't remember enemies.

T: Would you consider some guys closer friends than others?

M: Probably they were in the same barracks with me too. I don't remember. On the same platform. The enlisted men, we were all in one building. The commissioned officers were in another building. I got to know a few of them, but not too well because we worked all the time.

T: So you were much closer to the enlisted men.

M: Oh, sure.

T: And the plan of the....there's a map, a plan of the Zentsuji camp, and it looks like there were rooms, POW barracks rooms in the buildings there. Now, the men that you were friends with, how would you describe sort of the importance of having close friends? Why was that important?

M: The conversation probably more than anything.

T: Really? Just talking to each other?

M: Somebody to talk to. Yes. Talk about...of course, food was always the first thing you talked about. And going home. There was a lot, an awful lot of optimism. I know that we lost POWs that just lost hope.

T: So by talking to other people, it sounds like was a way of keeping your spirits up?

M: Right. That's right.

T: Were friends, you and your friends as a specific example, were you able to help each other on a daily basis outside of conversation? What could you do for each other?

M: I don't know that you could do anything for each other. I don't know that.

T: Was there a way of...I'm thinking like food. If you got extra food or if you were to take some grain or some sugar, would you share that with your friends?

M: Oh, I told you earlier...in fact, an awful lot of what we were able to get a hold of we shared with the officers. It was not unknown...

End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A, begins at counter 000.

T: So you would share extra food with the officers. Would you, if you got a little bit of something extra from work that day, would you share it with officers first or with your closest friends first?

M: You had to go to the galley first.

T: You mentioned that relations between the prisoners, from your memory, was pretty good.

M: I was kind of proud of how we got along. Right. Under the circumstances.

T: Difficult circumstances. Were there, from your memory, what would lead to tensions or disagreements between prisoners, when those happened?

M: I don't know. I know it happened but I don't know why. Probably personalities more than anything.

T: Well, a lot of guys in a small space.

M: Right.

T: Were there some prisoners who seemed to adjust to camp life better and...

M: Yes, there was. Yes. Their outlook was better.

T: So one way of adjusting better was better spirits.

M: Better spirits. You're right.

T: From your observations, what else, what other kind of guy would adjust well or seem to make a better time of it?

M: I don't know. I don't know. You don't have a choice. You have to be one of the people. A lot of this stuff was brand new to everybody. Because we were the first POWs.

T: Sure. And how old were you when you were captured, nineteen?

M: I was nineteen. My birthday was in November. So I was eighteen and about a month.

T: That's not very old, anyway.

M: Now when I go to our POW groups, I'm one of the older because I went in the service in '41. Most of, like your Air Force from Europe and stuff, they all didn't go in the service until about '43.

T: So now you find yourself one of the older guys.

M: In the POW groups now. Right.

T: Were you one of the younger POWs?

M: Yes.

T: Did that make any difference? That you were younger than the other guys?

M: Nah! That didn't make any difference. You did the same work. You ate the same food. You slept the same way.

T: Now as a prisoner, were you a person who, would you consider yourself a fairly optimistic, upbeat person or not?

M: I was. Yes.

T: How did you manage to keep a sense of optimism over a long time?

M: You never gave up your hope that our services would pick us up.

T: Let's be honest, was that hard from time to time, Mr. Roslansky? Three plus years is a long time.

M: Once in a while. Especially if we got the newspaper and you see where we had problems on some of the islands once in a while. But other than that we, we just knew that our Army, Marine Corps, our services were much stronger than the Japanese. You gotta believe it. And they were.

T: And was that, discussions about how the war was going, was that something that you remember people talking about?

M: Yes. Again, in my diary we pick that up many, many times. Even in the war in Europe. How the Germans were falling back, and how Italy fell, and stuff like that. Every positive move was real positive.

(2, A, 42)

T: And you found a way of reading between the lines of the news the Japanese gave you, you mentioned earlier.

M: Yes. Because the paper was censored in the first place. It had a bunch of holes in it. Then we finally got no paper at all. Later on, in '43 I think, it quit.

T: So for a while there after that stopped the news came from...rumors?

M: February 13, 1944, was our last newspaper.

T: And after that then, was the news more rumors or...

M: All rumors. Right.

T: Were rumors a part of camp life?

M: Yes. It had to be because that's all...no matter how true anything might have been, it came to us as rumor. Sometimes we would get some information from the guards and stuff. But again, we were smart enough to know that what they were telling us wasn't all true.

T: So you became...

M: I learned a lot of geography. I learned there were islands in the Pacific. I had no idea.

T: So you had to sort of...even when it was bits of information from the guards you had to learn to sort of sift through it.

M: Right.

T: Were there any kind of, from your knowledge, anybody claim or have a kind of a radio that got outside news?

M: Not in our camp. Now when you hear this, in the Philippines...when the POWs in the Philippines, when they were in the Philippines was a whole different way of doing things.

T: Now when you talk to ex-POWs who were in the Philippines, what part of your experiences and their experiences do you notice being most different? How was it different for you in Japan?

M: I don't think...the POWs in the Philippines worked, but not all of them and they had Filipino Red Cross. They got a lot of help from outside. It was possible for them to get help. This is my own opinion. The Japanese armies and stuff were so tied up in what they had to do that they were not paying that close attention to all the POWs in the Philippines. Although their treatment was not that good whatsoever either. Especially in groups.

T: Do you feel, the more you learn about your experiences in comparison, do you feel that in a sense they were luckier or had it easier than you?

M: I'm not going to say that. Yes, when they were in the Philippines a majority of them had it easier. Some of them it was not. Depending on what camp they were in. There were a lot of camps there.

T: Yes. That's interesting. Now when you get together now with ex-POWs of the Germans for example, how do discussions like that go when you talk about your POW experiences?

M: Now?

T: Yes.

M: In the first place, is that not that much discussion. I go to a POW meeting. I've got eighty-three members I think in Milwaukee Barbed Wire Chapter. I think I've only got two members out of the Pacific.

T: They're almost all POWs of the Germans.

(2, A, 79)

M: Yes. All from Germany almost. The Pacific POWs are older all of them, too.

T: When you guys get together, how do you talk about your experiences? I mean Germany and Japan. Different in many ways.

M: We don't talk about that part of it. It's the usual discussion, just like if it's a B-17 Air Force or B-24, they have their own arguments between themselves that way. This is the natural conversation.

T: Do you find that their experiences are so different from yours that you really don't have much to say to each other? Is that it?

M: I've learned to...of course, I've done a lot of service work. I can talk to them. Yes, the experience is entirely different. Entirely different. I mean, we were in the position that...you did what the guards told you. In other words, as far as escape, forget it because there's no place to go.

T: That I wanted to ask you about. I mean, some POWs want to talk about escape or that they thought about it. For you people there in Japan, was that ever even a subject you thought about?

M: No. You couldn't get out of camp without being noticed.

T: From what I hear you saying, it wasn't even something that you even bothered to talk about.

M: No. No. No. I don't know. It just wasn't...it wasn't possible to even think of something like that in Japan. There was no...you couldn't do it. It was impossible.

T: You're really right. You wouldn't have blended in very well in the countryside, would you?

M: No.

T: One last thing about camp I meant to ask you. Was, between the prisoners, how much of a problem was theft?

M: Theft? Again, like I told you before, I was happy with our people. It didn't happen. Believe me, if there was theft we all got on the guy that did it. If we knew it happened. I don't think...I really don't think there was much of it happening. Not between POWs. Put it that way.

T: Those occasions when theft did occur, what was most likely to be taken?

M: You mean between the person that did the stealing?

T: Yes.

M: I got no idea. They usually would be a big fight somewhere.

T: And what would be the most common thing that someone would likely to have stolen?

M: Again, it didn't happen that often. I don't remember. We shared pretty well. Even if you risk your life to steal. Even like when Red Newton would...he finally went to civilian prison. It was over a bag of sugar. But once that bag of sugar got in the camp it got split up. If it did.

T: So you remember the relations between prisoners as fair and respectful of other people and their things.

M: Now we did a lot of bargaining. Like if you got a Red Cross box and you didn't smoke. You traded your cigarettes to the other guy for some clem or something like that. There was a lot of that going around.

T: And that was fair bartering.

M: Yes. In fact, in a lot of cases we had what we called a fair value. In other words, a pack of cigarettes is worth one box of Klim [powdered milk] or sardines or whatever it should be. It was...you didn't say he'll give you one pack, I'll give you two. That didn't happen.

T: So there was almost, it sounds like, an exchange rate.

M: That's right. We were pretty well disciplined among ourselves.

(2, A, 123)

T: That's very interesting. So there was, in a sense, you say POWs didn't bargain against each other.

M: No.

T: Like bidding the price up. If you had something, there was an exchange rate value for that.

M: Right.

T: Now at that time were you a smoker?

M: I smoked some, but we got Japanese cigarettes. They were bad. I think I quit smoking.

T: So when you had access to cigarettes in a Red Cross package were you likely to keep them or trade them?

M: I would trade them.

T: And so you had smokers who did want the cigarettes.

M: Some people it was more important that they smoked than it was to eat. We still got that (*chuckles*).

T: At three something a pack, I think I can skip that. Now you mentioned that while you were there you did have guys die at Zentsuji.

M: Yes.

T: The most common cause of death that you remember was what?

M: I would say starvation. They called it stomach ulcers or stuff like that, but it was a result of no food. I don't remember if we had anybody die from malaria or not in our camp. Because it was always full of malaria.

T: But in the climate you had there, maybe not.

M: I don't know. I'm not going to say. On their medical records.

T: From your memory, did you have fellow POWs die from physical abuse by the Japanese?

M: Not in our camp, but we had some people I know that left our camp. I see where they had been killed by the guards. In mining camps or whatever it should be. On occasion. I've seen it happen.

T: At locations outside of your own.

M: Right. I don't know that we had anybody killed by a guard in our camp.

T: So, from your memory, when people died it was largely due to starvation or something medical.

M: Medical. Right.

T: How frequently did people die in the camp? Was this an out of the way occasion or fairly regular?

M: I would say out of the way. In other words, just throughout the four years I think we lost what, thirteen men in our camp.

T: Mr. Roslansky, does that happen more toward the end of the war or sort of spread out?

M: No. Some of these men, our men, were in the Philippines and in China before they came to Guam. Some of them were quite aged on Guam.

T: So you had different age groups.

M: Oh, Lord. Yes, we did. It could be as much as forty, fifty years.

T: So some of these guys were older men to begin with.

M: Right.

T: For whom the conditions may have been more difficult to take.

(2, A, 158)

M: Right.

T: So it sounds like a blessing being nineteen when you were captured—your age.

M: That part. Right. The other part, though, that helped there. When we went in the service we went through a pretty strict physical. In other words, anybody that was in the service at that time, period, was pretty healthy.

T: So you were in fairly good physical shape when you actually were captured.

M: Yes. I weighed 185 pounds. I dropped down to about 160.

T: How much weight did you lose while you were in...

M: Twenty-five or thirty pounds.

T: Did your weight, in a sense, stabilize? I mean, after losing initially?

M: I got to 160, 155 pounds and stayed about there. I think once or twice it was 145, but it stabilized pretty good.

T: Is that the weight you were at when you were liberated then? About that?

M: Yes.

T: Let me move on to the actual work that you did as a POW. Now, you've talked about the agricultural work, but the stevedore work. You took a small gauge railway to work in the morning. The port area at Takamatsu. Describe what that was like.

M: It wasn't a port. We went to freight yards.

T: So you were not working with ships so much as rail transportation.

M: Rail cars. Right.

T: Did you ever load and unload stuff off of ships or not?

M: I didn't. No. Some of our men, once they left our camp did, but I don't think it happened on Shikoku.

T: The rail freight area there. Describe what that looked like.

M: It was just a regular freight station. Had the big warehouses right off. In other words, they would bring supplies in on freight cars and we would haul—everything was done manually. Haul it to different destinations. Rice went one place. Sugar had another place and maize had another place. Stuff like that. And you stacked it. We had planks. You'd walk up planks until you got to your destination and drop your bag down. As you build it up you'd work back.

T: So it sounds like a lot of repetitive work. You were simply taking large bags or containers of things and moving it onto or off of rail cars.

M: Right. Salt. Cement. You never knew. We even handled military stuff. Some of it.

T: It was a wide variety of stuff and you never knew really what it was going to be from day to day.

M: No. We never did. No.

T: How many men were in the work party that you went with every day? To the freight yards.

M: I don't know. I don't know. We had I think, three or four sections. The section leaders...we had...I'd have to talk to somebody else as far as knowing how many were in each section. But we had our own section leader.

(2, A, 199)

T: And the section leader, was that also a POW?

M: Yes. One of our people. Right. We also loaded freight cars the same way. The reverse way. From the warehouse to the car.

T: So you did both. You either loaded or unloaded.

M: Right.

T: The containers. Were they...typically how heavy were the things you were loading and unloading?

M: The heaviest was one hundred kilo.

T: Two hundred twenty pounds.

M: ...about fifty kilo. One hundred pound bags. There was some paper, but the rice was in burlap. Most of it was in regular straw made bags they made. They made their own bags out of straw somehow.

T: You carried these individually or with somebody else?

M: Individually. We had two men loading you. In other words, if we hauled it out of the boxcar there was two guys who would pick this one hundred kilo up and load it on your shoulder and then you take it yourself.

T: So you didn't have to pick it up, which is the difficult part.

M: You couldn't pick it up. No.

T: So it was loaded onto you and you had to carry the fifty or one hundred kilo containers either on or off the cars.

M: Right.

T: Is this pretty much the work that you did here every day? The stevedore kind of work?

M: Pretty much. Yes. Even stones. If you loaded a carload of stones or sand. In stones you used yollo poles and one stone on each end of it. If it was too big you'd have one guy on each end of the yollo pole and put the stone in the middle.

T: Got it.

M: If you loaded, let's say gravel aggregate, it was all done in baskets and you stood in line. Just handed the basket from one guy to another to the car.

T: So the methods changed slightly depending on the kind of stuff you were moving.

M: Right.

T: But to characterize what you were doing, essentially you were just hired hands. You were just doing physical labor.

M: Right.

T: Did you work together with any non-POWs at any time?

M: No.

T: So the entire work party was your own and you didn't mix with civilians or Koreans or Chinese or anything else?

M: Not where we were. No. The only mixture was with some Japanese honchos we had.

T: Now were those civilians or...

M: They were civilians. Yes.

T: And were they the same people every day pretty much?

M: Pretty much. Yes. I suppose they were hired by the company they worked for.

(2, A, 235)

T: Do you remember any of those Japanese honchos specifically?

M: No. I don't. No.

T: These were guys that...did you come into contact with them or were they sort of at a distance?

M: We worked with them. You know, you guys put this the other way too. They needed us. They needed our work.

T: Thinking about that, as the war progressed they needed your labor more and more, really.

M: Right.

T: Did that impact the kind of treatment you got from them?

M: Yes. It increased. That's why I quit keeping a diary even because of that. Because their treatment got worse all the way through. The food supply went down. They watched us closer.

T: So in a sense, the more they needed your labor, the worse they treated you?

M: I would say yes, because they needed our labor more towards the end. They needed our labor all the time. They were always short of labor.

T: And it seems like the more they need your labor you might expect to get better treatment, and instead you got worse treatment.

M: You just worked harder.

T: Did the length of your working day, did it change from time to time? I mean as the war progressed.

M: Our working day?

T: Yes. Did it get longer?

M: No. I don't think that. We worked ten hours and it took us probably...we were two hours going back and forth to work. That would be twelve hours.

T: So it took a while to get to work.

M: Yes, it did. By the time we walked to the train, got the train, then got off the train and walked to our work destination.

T: So these Japanese honchos, to get back to them, are not people that you recall specifically. That have names for you or faces really.

M: No.

T: Would they hit or abuse prisoners or were they simply there to watch?

M: I don't think that the civilians bothered us that much. The guards did. In other words, if a civilian caught one of us stealing, he would go to the guard. A lot of times it would work in reverse because that guard would not want to admit that somebody stole something on his watch. Follow me?

T: I sure do.

M: So there was a lot...we were smart enough to know what was happening.

T: So if there was any kind of punishment so to speak, it was the guard that handed that out.

M: Right. There's occasions when there was stuff missing and they'd come to our guard. No, no, no. I watched him. They don't steal. They didn't steal. We had it (*chuckles*).

T: That's very interesting. You'd think that, in a sense, the guard was protecting himself when it might have really been true that there was stealing going on.

(2, A, 278)

M: He was protecting himself. Yes. Because—this is my opinion. If something happened on a guard's watch, he got taken care of by his own people. In the Army. I'm sure he got chastised quite well.

T: So he was protecting himself and the civilian was the person... Now, did your guards, are these guards that went with you from camp on the train every morning?

M: Yes. We had the same guard at work. We were assigned the same guard all day.

T: So the guard went with you, stayed with you all day, and then came back in the evening?

M: Right. They had their headquarters. They slept there. Somewhere. They had their own place there.

T: From the guard's perspective this sounds like pretty dull work. In a sense, his whole day was kind of watching you?

M: Right.

T: Did you communicate with these guards much? I mean the guys that...

M: Yes. Because they really were the people...in other words, the person that was in charge of our group would communicate with the guard. If something happened, it was up to him. We were not all in the same conversation.

T: I see. So in a sense, you had a representative that the guard would speak to first?

M: Right.

T: Now you mentioned working consistently with an occasional day off. Related to that is your own health. How was your health during your time at Zentsuji?

M: My health was pretty good. One time I fell off the planks and my shoulder got so bad I couldn't carry any longer. But I was only off about two days. Had to be back up there.

T: Was that the only real physical injury that you suffered that you remember?

M: I think...yes. Because the rest, like your teeth and stuff, there's nothing you can do about it. You just lived with it. If you had a boil on your arm you tried to squeeze it out or get it out. You put up with it.

T: The shoulder injury is the only, what we might say, work-related injury that you can recall.

M: Yes. Other than beatings. Right.

T: How frequent were those?

M: I don't know. Once a week or once a month. You would never know.

T: Were there certain guards that you knew were more likely to beat prisoners than others?

M: Yes. We did have. Again I can't tell you which ones. But we had our favorite guards also.

T: So ones that you...

M: In other words, we knew what guard we could do more with than some others.

T: Were there guards that you would say you almost liked or didn't mind being around?

M: As far as taking care of us, probably. Yes. Because they would get us to work. They'd have their girlfriend or something somewhere nearby and they'd disappear for a while.

T: Really? So they wouldn't necessarily be there watching you the whole time?

(2, A, 329)

M: No. Sometimes they'd go and get a nap somewhere or something. This happened.

T: So there were some of the guards that...the treatment from the guards was not consistent.

M: No. It wasn't consistent. No.

T: Some of the guards were more likely to abuse the prisoners. Others were not.

M: Right.

T: And as far as your memory, you were hit or beaten by the guards from time to time.

M: I had a broken nose. They beat on it. In fact, they fixed that when I got back from the service.

T: The little summary that you sent me mentioned that. Was your nose broken a long time before that?

M: You mean before the summary?

T: No. I mean, you got it fixed when you got back to San Diego you mentioned.

M: Yes. A couple, three years.

T: So you lived with a broken nose for...

M: Sure. You put up with a lot of stuff. The only time...appendicitis or something like that. Then it really got difficult. But even some of the people that were injured had to pretty well take care of their injuries.

T: Themselves.

M: Yes.

T: You mentioned your shoulder injury. Did you suffer much from any typical tropical diseases?

M: No. Not tropical. But like your vitamin deficiency and beri beri. You wake up in the morning and everybody will take a poke at your legs to see who had the biggest indentation.

T: So beri beri was something you had.

M: I think everybody had. Yes.

T: Vitamin deficiencies. How did those impact you as far as your health?

M: I would suspect my teeth and my hearing. An awful lot of that due to vitamin deficiencies. I have been fortunate. Because I take pretty good care of myself.

T: So it sounds like other people suffered...some people suffered more than others as far as things like teeth or disease.

M: Right. Right.

T: Was any kind of medical attention or help provided by the Japanese for anything?

M: Minimal. There was some. They used our own doctors pretty much, but they had to get their supplies from the Japanese which was not available.

T: So although you had medical professionals among the POWs, without supplies or medicine there wasn't much they could do.

M: You see, all of our officers went to Rokaroso in January of '45 or later in '45. Then we lost all of our professional people also.

End of Tape 2, Side A. Side B Begins at counter 383.

M: ...they had to go to work there, I guess.

T: And was that on the island of Shikoku as well?

M: No. That was on Honshu.

T: The big island. For that last period of 1945 you were without your officers.

M: Yes. Then our camp was down to about 116 people or whatever it was.

T: As the war progressed, of course it did go increasingly badly for the Japanese. What indications did you pick up as prisoners that things were going badly for the Japanese?

M: Through the scuttlebutt. Also we began seeing B-29s come over.

T: So you could see the planes. Was that good for sort of spirits to see American planes flying over?

M: Oh, absolutely. It's what we waited for, for years.

T: So in a sense, what you had hoped and believed in was starting to happen.

M: Yes. We could have been bombed but we didn't care.

T: Really?

M: Yes. Because that was probably one of the things that was going to happen anyhow.

T: Being at Zentsuji, being away from the port at Takamatsu, you were less likely to be bombed. Were you ever at Takamatsu when it was bombed?

M: No. No. That was done at night.

T: And were you far enough away...could you still hear or see anything?

M: No. We didn't. Because it was at night. If we'd have been awake we probably could have seen the planes. The other thing, we'd see freight cars come in with machine gun bullets through them and stuff like that. Different things kept popping up all the time.

T: So there were clues or indications that the war was getting closer to Japan.

M: It was in Japan.

T: Yes. One thing suggests itself. As the possible invasion of Japan became part of the options, did you or the men around you worry what might happen to you if the Allies did invade?

M: No. We were pretty much under the impression that we wouldn't come back.

T: Was that something that people openly talked about or a thought that you kept to yourself?

M: You kept to yourself.

T: So you don't remember open conversations about what's going to happen to us if...

M: No. No. That was unpredictable.

T: Did your camp life change at all in the last month of the war there, as far as indications that the Japanese were preparing for some kind of invasion or anything like this?

M: Yes. From the end of '44 even our rations were down. Everything. Because I suspect they weren't getting stuff on the mainland at all anymore. Once we had boycotted them out pretty much. So our food supplies, everything, went down.

T: You noticed a cut in your rations.

M: Right. And I'm sure the civilians were suffering the same as we were.

(2, B, 416)

T: You continued to work at the rail yards up until the very end. Is that right?

M: Yes. Until they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. We went to work that morning and they sent us home. Then they finally told us that they had finally had an agreement with the United States that they would quit fighting.

T: In the last months of the war there, at the freight yards or in the city, could you see the impact of Allied, American bombing attacks?

M: Only to the fact that when the freight cars came in and stuff they were shot up. As far as the impact immediately at our yard, no.

T: So the rail yard wasn't...

M: Other than Takamatsu, was gone. It was burned out.

T: So the city got bombed or was bombed at the end, but the rail yards, the freight yards, no?

M: Even the little shack where we heated our soup and stuff was gone.

T: How close to the end of the war was that, that you remember?

M: Oh, that was in July I think of '45.

T: So pretty close to the very end.

M: It was close. I'm not positive. I think it was early in July. The sixth and seventh of July. Something like that.

T: And even with the city having suffered the air attack, did you still go to work the same day and pretty much try to do the same work?

M: Two days we didn't go to work. Otherwise we did the same thing. Right.

T: You said you experienced the end of the war there in August. And I'm wondering if you could sort of walk through that. How did the Japanese provide the news to you that the war was over?

M: They sent us home from work and they told us that...we didn't know anything about that speech. We knew nothing about the atomic bomb. Although we were within sixty miles of it. Where we were at. Like as if nothing ever happened. Everything's all settled now.

T: Did they call the men together and make sort of a public announcement, or how did you actually get the news about the end of the war?

M: I think that their officers told our leading men. Because what happened, their guards disappeared. We set up our own guards and stuff.

T: So there was an announcement not made, from your memory, not made to the entire POW population, but rather your officers were told and they told you?

M: Yes.

T: And at that point you say the Japanese guards disappeared.

M: Right.

T: Now it was a number of weeks before you were evacuated from that camp.

M: It was four weeks.

T: What happened in that intervening four weeks? How did you sort of organize your affairs in the camp?

M: We just sat and waited for somebody to come and get us. They dropped food to us and stuff like that. Supplies came in. We were so happy to see that...just sit and wait and see what happens.

T: So they knew where you were.

(2, B, 448)

M: They knew where we were. Yes. But we did not know for sure when they were going to pick us up.

T: So what kind of supplies were dropped and how was it...did they actually just drop things out of planes?

M: B-29s. They dropped pallets with parachutes. Some was in barrels, some in pallets. It was fruit. It was meat. It was everything. Clothing. It was all there.

T: Did you come into contact with Japanese in any way in that month?

M: Some of our people went out of camp, but I was just happy to sit and wait.

T: So you were not one of those tempted to leave camp and look around.

M: No. I had no permission or want to go out and see how those people lived. I just wanted to get away from them.

T: So you were content to wait in the camp for the Americans to come and get you.

M: Right.

T: Did you gain any weight in that month there by getting extra supplies?

M: Oh, sure. We all gained some weight. We had to be careful how much we eat at that time.

T: Yes. That's something a number of POWs have mentioned. How much of a problem was that for you? The sudden change in kind of food and the amount you had.

M: It was no problem. I was careful.

T: Were you careful?

M: Yes.

T: How hard was that to be careful?

M: Well... (*chuckles*)

T: I mean, let's face it. I keep thinking if I were hungry as POWs describe and someone's dropping a...

M: I know but we were aware of the fact of what could happen if you did eat too much. And make yourself sick. That would be the worst. You live through four years of it and then ruin the rest of your life yourself.

T: From your observations, did some people listen to that advice better than others?

M: I don't think that...we really had probably only one person I know of that did eat too much.

T: Did he die?

M: No. He didn't die because nobody died after the officers left I don't think. In our camp.

T: How did you...you prisoners that were left there for that month, how did you sort of organize daily life in the camp without the Japanese there?

M: We set up our own guards. Went right back to military....who was the senior person and all this stuff. Your regular military way of living.

T: And the food that was dropped by the planes, was that enough to supply the camp?

M: Oh, much. It was over.

T: You had more than enough now.

M: We still had our own galley and stuff. Our cooks who would cook that stuff up. Whatever should be.

(2, B, 478)

T: You had a—on the map there—you had a cookhouse. Who worked in the cookhouse?

M: Who worked in it?

T: Yes.

M: I worked in it for a while. These pots were fired with wood. You washed pots and stuff. You had different...other than the cooks. There was other jobs to do.

T: Sure. Now was cookhouse duty, was that something that you got regularly, every so often?

M: No. I don't know what determined how we got in there. I got no idea.

T: But you had cookhouse duty. More than once?

M: Yes.

T: From your perspective, or from other peoples' perspective, was that considered easier duty than going to work at the freight yards?

M: Oh, it was easier. Sure.

T: So that was something that you might have wanted to do?

M: Yes. That's right.

T: Were there other jobs around the camp that could have got you out of going to stevedore work?

M: Not that I know of. Well, we had a barber and shoemaker. Stuff like that. Standard stuff.

T: There probably weren't too many barbers though, were there?

M: No.

T: So one way to get out of stevedore work was to have cookhouse duty.

M: Yes. I don't know. I don't know what determined that. I can't tell you that.

T: Right. But you remember doing it at least once and maybe more.

M: A couple times. Yes.

T: Did you actually cook, or were you sort of working as a helper or whatever?

M: I was a helper.

T: I'm looking at this map. It shows a chicken run, a rabbit shed. Are these things that you were...

M: The officers. I think when the rabbits, they take thirty at a time for dinner. I don't know how many they had. Like I say, the Japanese got what they wanted out of them. But the officers kind of took care of that part of it.

T: I see. So that wasn't something that as an enlisted man you had much, or anything, to do with?

M: No.

T: Back to the end of the war here. You experienced it and you have this sort of one month period before the Americans arrive. Were you worried about any kind of retribution by Japanese civilians at that time or did you feel pretty safe in camp?

M: We felt safe. We had our own guards. The civilians were...as it happens, that war (***) anybody I believe.

T: Did you come into contact with them at all in that month?

M: I didn't. No.

(2, B, 507)

T: Some people did leave camp?

M: Right.

T: Did they talk about what they found when they left camp? I mean, what they came into contact with?

M: What do you mean?

T: The guys that left camp and then came back. Did they talk at all about what they...

M: I don't know that. I don't remember that.

T: From your record, you were actually removed from camp September 13. Taken to the mainland and then transported back to Guam. You spent about a week there, it looks like, before on September 28 you boarded a Liberty ship for a trip back to San Francisco, back to San Diego. Once you got out of the camp, what kind of medical care was provided by the US military for you?

M: In Guam they went through our teeth. They cleaned our teeth and the regular routine physical. Of course, we spent seven days there. Then the same thing. We ended up in San Diego at Balboa. I had my nose straightened out. Different things happened as far as physical and repatriation.

T: Sure.

M: A lot of therapy.

T: You say therapy. Physical therapy or psychological therapy?

M: Both. Both.

T: On the psychological side, did they debrief you in a way, and sort of begin to ask you about your experiences?

M: They really didn't. They had my diary. I see that they made notes of stuff that they picked out of it. They're still in there. But not that much debriefing. No.

T: What we now identify as PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, was there any counseling provided for you immediately after being liberated?

M: No. No. I don't think that. Not in my case. It was probably for some of them. There was no such thing as PTSD.

T: Correct.

M: Though I got ten percent comp because of residues of POW as they called it.

T: But only ten percent.

M: Yes.

T: Now, you were discharged in April of '46, and that's a good seven, eight months after you were actually liberated. The kind of care had you had at—and you were in two facilities. You were at US Naval Hospital San Diego and also Great Lakes.

M: Yes.

T: Was that again, would you characterize it as primarily physical therapy or physical recovery?

M: Physical. Yes. We had open gate liberty. You were back and forth. Until the time we were discharged.

T: So you could come and go pretty much as you liked.

M: Right.

T: But again, you don't recall providing any kind of counseling services or psychological help about your...

(2, B, 541)

M: Not at that time. In fact, I kind of feel bad. I think if I...I already had six years in the service. Probably with a little counseling, I would have stayed.

T: Did you think about making it a career?

M: Well, you were happy to get home. But now, when I think it over, I think it wouldn't have taken much. When I went in the service I didn't know anything. I had nothing. Just high school graduation.

T: Did they ask you about staying in the service? I mean did somebody...

M: I don't remember that. That's what I say. I don't know how much happened at that time. It's hindsight. I see it probably would have been an advantage. But also when we were at twenty-one dollars a month as a private. But the wages were up of course in '46 but not that much.

T: It sounds like you didn't really seriously consider staying in the service.

M: No. I didn't.

T: Years later now you sometimes second guess yourself?

M: Yes. I did all right without it. But I do second guess. Right.

T: You already had six years in the service.

M: Yes. I did.

T: That's a third of the way there almost.

M: It was.

T: You got discharged in '46 and when you got out in April, officially, did you go back to Minnesota?

M: No. I went back to Minnesota in December '45. I went to Great Lakes and then I went home to Minnesota. Then I went back to Great Lakes.

T: Were you discharged from Great Lakes?

M: Right.

T: Now when you went back home there, you had brothers and sisters, right?

M: I had two brothers and a sister. I had one brother in the Army and I had one brother ROTC.

T: And when you got back to Minnesota in '45, were your folks still both alive?

M: My folks were divorced. My mother was in San Diego. My father was in Minnesota.

T: Did you see your mother pretty much when you got back to San Diego?

M: To San Diego. Right. She was living in San Diego at that time.

T: This is what I wanted to ask next. When you first saw your mother, for example, how much did she want to know about your POW experience?

M: Here we go. (*Speaking very emotionally*) I don't share that.

T: Let me ask it this way, and tell me if any of these questions are uncomfortable. Just say they are and we move on. Did it get easier to talk to your mom, for example, over the years about that?

M: No. No. Never shared it.

T: Did you share that with your dad or with any of your brothers and sister?

M: No. No.

(2, B, 580)

T: And I'll ask just this question: is it more that they didn't ask or you didn't tell?

M: Well, I didn't tell. The second thing, at that time when you were in the service, you took an oath that what happened stayed there. Pretty much. In the Marine Corps at least.

T: And did you feel at that time that that meant that you couldn't talk about your POW experience?

M: That was service, wasn't it?

T: Yes. Did anybody ever tell you that concretely? Roslansky, you don't talk about this? Or is that just the way you interpreted it?

M: When we took the oath at Fort Snelling that was our oath at that time. Pretty much the fact that you keep the things to yourself.

T: So I hear you saying that for you, that you interpreted that to mean also your POW experience.

M: Yes. I don't care to share it.

T: So it was one of those things that...all right. The other part of that I wanted to ask and again, these are topics that are part of all these interviews and the last thing we want to do it make anyone feel uncomfortable, so if any of these questions are uncomfortable all you need to do is say so. Okay? We'll respect that immediately. You were married in 1946.

M: Right.

T: How much of your POW experience did you share with your wife at that time?

M: None.

T: And you had four children as well, with your wife. Right?

M: Yes.

T: As your kids were growing up, I mean kids sometimes just ask things. And they're not always subtle about it. How much did your kids ask about your service experience?

M: Nothing. They were babies. There was no questions. Here's what happened. My mother never threw a letter away. In other words, all the letters I sent here were there yet. All the communications. I've got all that stuff today. I've given it to my kids. They can do what they want with it.

T: Have they...have your kids developed any curiosity about what happened to you as they've gotten older?

M: No. That's not part of our discussion.

T: Even today.

M: Right.

T: And yet an interview, for example, like this, with someone like me and we've met, what, one time?

M: Yes.

T: Is it easier to talk to someone like me than it is to talk to your family members?

M: Oh, yes.

T: So in other words, to understand, if your kids would ask questions like the ones I've asked, would you find it more difficult to answer them?

M: No. Yes. Maybe. My feeling is anything that I can do with you would help to protect a former POW. It has helped. Since World War II. I talked to B-29 pilots and stuff and they were taught what to do in case they were taken POW. Even in World War II. We knew nothing about that part of it. Follow me?

(2, B, 627)

T: Yes. Sure. The B-29...by that time, by 1945, the service knew what those guys could expect.

M: Yes. I talked to a B-29 pilot at a meeting I was at. He said that they told him just name, rank, and serial number and make sure the military got them, not the civilians. Another thing though, of course you know, as far as Japan, international law meant nothing to them. They never signed it. They brought that up to us many times. We'd say according to the international all this...that don't mean nothing to us. We didn't accept it.

T: That's right.

M: We lived that all the way through.

T: When you talk about nothing happening until Vietnam, between the late '40s and, really, the 1970s, what was your life like as an ex-POW?

M: I went back to civilian life. POW meant nothing to me at that time.

T: You weren't a member of any organizations?

M: Yes. I'm a past department chapter commander DAV Wisconsin. I've held positions in almost every organization there is. Service organization. Secretary, treasurer.

T: Now, at the end of the war there, in the '40s and '50s, were you part of any organizations?

M: I joined the DAV in '52.

T: In the DAV did people know you as an ex-POW?

M: Yes. Yes. That they did. Right.

T: When did you join American ex-POWs?

M: I think in '81 or '80. Somewhere in there.

T: I know from your own account, that your disability got dropped from ten percent to zero percent in 1948. What percent disability do you have now?

M: I'm at one hundred now.

T: You're one hundred. When did you get percentage back again after they dropped you to zero?

M: I got thirty percent in 1982. And then I went to one hundred percent in '92. I was out in Arizona then.

T: What happened in the early '80s? How did things change for you as an ex-POW then? Did you contact the VA or did they contact you?

M: You mean as far as...in the early '80s. I was national service officer in Milwaukee, so I was pretty much up on what was happening.

T: With the ex-POWs.

M: The DAV.

T: Did you go to the...did you revisit the VA at that point to get an assessment to increase your percentage of disability?

M: From zero to thirty percent. Yes. The DAV did that for me.

T: And did that come fairly easily, that first...going from zero to thirty percent or did you have to fight for that?

M: Yes. We had that 100084s or whatever they were.

T: The Protocol for POWs.

M: Protocol. Yes.

T: At that point, when the protocol...for you individually, was that hard to go over stuff again?

(2, B, 679)

M: I was doing that for people, so it was pretty easy for me. I already was...I had several POWs I had gotten comp for by filling out that 100048 or whatever it was. It was not that difficult there.

T: So in a sense, it sounds like helping other people get their stories down made it easier for you to talk about your own?

M: Oh, yes.

T: That's very interesting.

M: And we had this in Arizona. It was really great. Every week we had...POWs got together. Had support groups. Harris...the one that signed that thing.

T: How long did you live in Arizona?

M: Four years.

T: Where were you out there?

M: Mesa.

T: Was that after you had retired?

M: Oh, yes. I retired in 1981.

T: Then you lived in Arizona for several years. Let me ask you: after the war, did you have any kind of flashbacks or dreams or things that brought back images from your POW time?

M: I still get them.

T: Have they decreased over time?

M: No.

T: Would you say they come regularly or sporadically?

M: Sporadically.

T: And I'll ask you, are there certain images that come back again and again?

M: I don't know.

T: You were in business for yourself for many years in the auto dismantling business. Did you have coworkers or employees?

M: Yes.

T: Did they know anything about you being an ex-POW?

M: No.

T: So in a sense, you were just their boss or their coworker.

M: Right.

T: One thing about the interview that we're doing here, is it seems you've been very open and honest in answering many questions. Is this something that you could have done or would have done twenty years ago with me?

M: Oh, yes. Because I did this...went public in '97. I wrote quite a thesis for the regional office here. I've got copies of that. And presented it to them. Of POW—not experiences as much as what we can do to help them.

T: Is the kind of interview that we're doing today something you could have done, do you feel, any time since 1945?

M: Oh, I believe that. Yes. Well, it was later in years when I felt that I wanted to help the POWs.

T: But the kind of interview we're having today still isn't something you'd want to have with your kids or anything.

M: No.

(2, B, 732)

T: Now, what you will get from our office here, from me, is a transcript of our interview today. That is, a written record. Is that something that you would give to your kids so they could read about it?

M: I'll give it to my daughter and she can put it with the rest of the stuff (*sounding emotional*).

T: So she could have that. Let me ask you this in one of the last questions. When you think about your POW experience, in what way do you think that changed you fundamentally as a person? It's kind of a before and after.

M: It makes you really appreciate what you've got today. I'll tell you. When you live (*sounding very emotional*) in those situations and rules and regulations, you're just happy that you're away from it.

End of Tape 2. Tape 3, Side A begins at counter 000.

T: ...experience. Surely. Do you think that when you got back that friends or family members saw Marvin Roslansky and said he seems different in some way?

M: No. I don't think that.

T: And for you, you find that it...it sounds like it makes you more thankful of what you do have.

M: Right.

T: On a regular basis.

M: Right. Every day.

T: That's a good thing, Mr. Roslansky. A lot of us don't think about that too often. Let me ask you—let me first thank you very much for answering many questions and providing the information about your POW experience. Is there something that you want to add? I've been the person asking most of the questions up until now. What might you want to add at this point? Any kind of a detail or even a part of the story that I neglected to talk about.

M: I don't know. You wanted to know a little bit about education. What the government furnished after. You told me before the interview that would be part of it.

T: Yes. Please go ahead.

M: I got ninety dollars a month as what they called benefits for education and training.

T: Like GI Bill benefits.

M: Yes. Ninety dollars. But then I went to school on the GI Bill. I went framework and wheel alignment at Rock Island, Illinois. I got a job at a body shop in Racine. So that was my first experience at work. I got that ninety dollars a month for a short while, but as soon as I started working, they started cutting that down to what they call journeyman's pay. Journeyman's pay was 132 dollars a month. Something like that.

T: How long before you went into business for yourself?

M: See... '46. I went in business with a partner in 1950 until 1961. And I had another partner until 1966. Then I bought him out in '66. That was myself from '66 on to '81.

T: You had employees but no more co-owners or partners.

M: No. All employees. I was sole owner.

T: Did you like being in business for yourself?

M: Oh, yes. We went back to Minnesota for four years. I bought a mini-mart down at Lakefield. We worked crafts and cards and stuff like that.

T: No kidding.

M: I worked at Sears. Sears Catalog Store until they went out of business. I worked at Wal-Mart for about four, five years.

T: So you've kept...you've worked for...even after you actually retired, so to speak.

M: I had to quit working when I got one hundred percent comp.

T: Really? That was part of the deal?

M: Well, you can't work.

T: So if you want one hundred percent, you can't work anymore.

M: No.

T: Do you miss working?

M: Oh, yes. I do. I got some carpenter work in the garage. I did a lot of cross stitch. I stay busy. I find stuff. I mean, with the veterans' organizations. I belong to every...Purple Heart, American Veterans, American Legion, VFW, QUAN, the Defenders of the Marianas.

T: You do keep yourself busy, don't you?

M: And POW. Yes. I do.

T: I couldn't imagine sitting still myself either. I don't understand that. Do you feel the GI Bill benefits was something that helped you after the war?

M: I took that frame straightening and I went to Racine Vocational School and took welding, electric welding, gas welding. Then I spent one year, '49, in fire protection. Sprinkler. But in 1982 when I got that thirty percent, I was all retired then. I went back to school. I went to marketing and sales for sixty credits.

T: Good for you.

M: That was through the GI Bill.

T: So you could still use GI Bill even then?

M: Yes. Actually thirty percent.

T: You've had a number of different work experiences and a number of...you've lived a number of different places too, haven't you?

M: Yes.

T: When you got back in '45 you went to Minnesota. Where did you go after that then? After '45.

M: I went to Great Lakes. '46 I moved to Racine. I married and stayed in Racine.

T: And you were in Rock Island, Illinois. When was that?

M: In '46. I drove back and forth.

T: Oh, boy. How far is that?

M: Not too far. Every weekend. I'd spend a week at school and drive home for the weekend.

T: It still seems like an awful long way.

M: I forget. I don't remember how long I studied there. I worked there. It was hands-on course.

T: And then your working life was in Racine until the early '80s, right?

M: Right. Right. I was in Racine until the early '80s. Right.

T: Then you had four years in Arizona. Was that in the '80s?

(3, A, 56)

M: I had four years in Minnesota first.

T: That's right. Minnesota. Then Arizona after that?

M: No. I went back to Whitewater, Wisconsin for four years. Then I went to Arizona for about four years.

T: And now you've kind of come full circle back to Racine.

M: Racine. Yes.

T: What else what might you want to add? I always feel like I want to give people the chance since I ask most of the questions.

M: I think we've covered it. I really do. My main thing here is if I can help anybody else that gets in the position we were.

T: Let me ask you, as an ex-POW yourself, when you watch or listen to the stories about what's going on in those prisons in Iraq, what goes through your mind?

M: What would? We were without communication. Being a POW I guess I don't agree with all the news media and stuff over there. Reporting all that stuff. It's just...there's stuff coming that people don't have to know about. Some of it. During time of conflict, things happen. Gotta happen. You're fighting for your own life.

T: Do you—I'm just curious—as a prisoner, as an ex-prisoner yourself, do you find yourself sort of feeling for the Iraqi prisoners or not?

M: In what respect?

T: Well, in a way...

M: As far as abuse, they probably is nobody had worse abuse than we did.

T: Is it hard to watch the stories about what's going on in Iraq with the prisoners?

M: No. I get prejudiced because...in Japan, I mean, as far as what's happening to the people in Iraq, that's nothing. From what we had to go through. Some of it.

T: And does it bother you at all that the US is a signatory to the Geneva Convention when you hear those stories? The Japanese weren't.

M: What's that?

T: The United States has signed the Geneva Convention.

M: I realize that and, well, I think our people are a little bit too easy on them. I really do. Because...I don't know.

T: It's a difficult situation, isn't it?

M: It is. They treat their people so much different regardless over there. Even in Iraq or in...Saudi. We don't know a lot of...we know what happens to our people. We do not know what happens to their people.

T: Thanks again for the interview, Mr. Roslansky. I'll turn the recorder off.

END OF INTERVIEW