George Bottoms
Narrator

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Interviewers

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George Bottoms **GB**
Mike Russert **MR**
Wayne Clark **WC**

MR: This is an interview with George Bottoms at the Microtel Inn, Wellsville, New York. It is the 6th of May 2003 at approximately 9 a.m. The interviewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clark. Could you tell me your full name, date of birth and place of birth, please?

GB: George Daniel Bottoms. I was born February 18, 1918. I presently live at 2810 State Route 244, Belmont, New York.

MR: Where were you born?

GB: Battle Creek, Michigan.

MR: What was your educational background prior to going into service?

GB: I completed high school at the W. K. Kellogg Consolidated Agricultural High School in Augusta, Michigan. That was in 1936. That fall I entered Michigan State College; I completed four years of a

Bachelor of Science degree in landscape architecture, majoring in park administration.

MR: Where were you and what was your reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

GB: I can't remember where I was…. Oh, yes I do. I had been drafted into the Army and I was at Fort Custer, Michigan at the time.

MR: So you were in the service prior to Pearl Harbor?

GB: That's correct. Yeah. It was on a Sunday. I went to a movie on the post and came back to the barracks about 9 o'clock and everybody was in an uproar about the attack on Pearl Harbor. I was a buck private at the time.

MR: Do you remember what your initial reaction was?

GB: No. I figured it was just some big event, that's all. I wasn't concerned or worried.

MR: Ok. Could you tell us about your service from the time that you were inducted?

GB: Well, I was inducted in November of 1941; that put me in Fort Custer in December. This was a repo depot, or replacement depot, and we were tested there to see what branch of the service we should go in. It was finally decided that I should go to the Air Corps. So they sent me down to St. Louis, Jefferson Barracks. There, of course, they gave you further tests. I applied for the pilot training, but I had 2/30 in one eye and 20/20 in the other eye; they wouldn't take me for a pilot—you had to have 20/20.

Anyway, they finally decided because of my training in physics that I could be a weather observer, so they sent me down to Daniel Field in Augusta, Georgia. I got down there in March of 1942, and they started me training to be a weather observer. I was anxious to use

my training as a landscape architect, so I asked them how I could get transferred to the Corps of Engineers. They said, as an enlisted man we can't transfer you, but if you want to apply for officer training, that's about the only way you can go. So I applied for that.

In April 1942 they sent me up to Fort Belvoir, Virginia for OCS training. That was one of the toughest 3 months of my life. The tactical officers were on your back every minute to make you do this and make you do that. I finally made it through. After I got my commission in July of 1942 they decided that with my college education and my experience with drafting that I ought to go to the enlisted specialist branch, so I was sent over there. I think I've got a picture of that. So I was made an officer in that. I hadn't been there very long when they sent us down to Lexington, Kentucky (picks up copy of newspaper clipping)--

MR: If you hold that up in front of you, Wayne can get a picture.

GB: (The headline reads "Army Map Technicians Now Being Trained at U. K.) We were down there about nine months. What they were training is specialists in topo computing, surveying, engineer drafting and topographical drafting. They had these four specialists. I don't remember the numbers of students they had per class (reads from article). It says 145 men every two weeks. They eventually had 870 at one time. So I was in charge of engineer drafting.

This was kind of a luxury assignment. We were given a per diem; I think it was $6 a day in addition to your base pay. The two officers there rented a nice house in the countryside and while I was there… this was horse country, Lexington, Kentucky, and I got to see Man-O-War. Man-O-War was still living then. He wasn't a big horse, he was a small horse compared with other racehorses. We got to go on weekends to various places and see a lot of sights.

That lasted from September of 1942 until July of 1943, and the Army pretty well filled up its quota or its necessity for these various

specialists, so we were recalled and sent back to Fort Belvoir. In the meantime, in July of 1943, I got married. So I took my new bride back to Fort Belvoir and had to find a place to live. Finally, we found a place in Alexandria, and I commuted with some other officers back and forth to Fort Belvoir. During this time I continued with my duties as course supervisor, and in addition they assigned me… it wasn't PR, it had to do with orientation and bringing the soldiers up to date on current events. So once a week I had to get up on the stage and give the guys an update on how the war was progressing. That was one of my duties.

Along about the end of 1943, the word came down from the War Department that all those who hadn't been overseas had to go overseas, because the guys who had been overseas had been there two years and longer and they wanted to give them a respite and let them come back home. This one officer here, Larson, he had to go… The other two, Whittemore and Cooper, they didn't have to go. Larson had just had a young son and they tried to get him off but they said, no, you've got to go. And of course I didn't have any children. So anyway, the two of us were sent overseas. I went separately. I got my orders to go in April of 1944 and initially I was sent to Camp Chenango in Pennsylvania. It's in southwestern Pennsylvania. I got there in February, and there was an officer there who learned about my abilities, and he wanted me to help him with the improvements of the camp, the physical improvements: paths and roads and planning, beautification, stuff like that. But that came to naught because the Army had other ideas of what we should so.

So anyway my wife came down from Battle Creek, Michigan and visited me while I was there, and we made a trip up to Buffalo from there and back. Then in late March, they said "Here's your orders for overseas." So they put a big contingent of us on a train with old, old passenger cars, no bunks or anything. They sent us down to Camp Patrick Henry in Virginia, near Norfolk. While we were down there, they issued us various pieces of equipment that we would need overseas and on the way overseas. Finally, the orders came out for us to go up to Philadelphia to Camp Kilmer. I think there were six of us.

So we all got on the train and went up to New York City, and since we didn't have to report until midnight, we spent some time sightseeing. We went up in the Empire Building, and things of that sort. Finally, we reported to Camp Kilmer about 10 p.m. The guys that were in charge were angry with us: "You guys were supposed to be here at so-and-so." We brought out our orders that we were supposed to report at such and such a date, and the custom is that you have until midnight on that date to be there. "Well, you missed your boat—it was down at Philadelphia, we were going to put you on a boat to take you overseas." They didn't discipline us or anything, but they let us know they were angry with us. They put us back on a train and sent us back down to Camp Patrick Henry. They said "Now we're going to get you on the boat you were supposed to be on. You were supposed to board it in Philadelphia." It went from Philadelphia on down the river to the bay there near Norfolk. It was in a big convoy. It was a hundred-ship convoy, a great big convoy. The day we were supposed to board the ship—I can't remember the exact date, I think it was the 7th of April or something—they put us on a train that took us down to the wharf. We got off with all our paraphernalia and they put us on a tug and took us out to the ship.

This was my first time to see a Liberty ship. The name of it was the Sam Gaudie. It was a lend-lease ship to the British. It had a British crew and British captain, and British food. They had one stateroom for five. They didn't have a place for me, so they put me up in the cabin where the gunnery officer would be stationed. I guess I was the ranking officer of the group; I was a first lieutenant by that time and the others were all second lieutenants. So finally the convoy lifted anchor and took off and headed east in the Atlantic Ocean, and as soon as we got on board, we asked the captain where we were headed. He said, "We're going to India." That was the first time we knew; none of the orders told us where we were going to go. It was a carload primarily of rails and boxcars. They had additional other cargo pertaining to the war, but principally that's what the cargo was. It was somewhat of an uneventful trip across the Atlantic. As we approached Gibraltar they were more concerned because the submarine packs were attacking these convoys, picking off a ship

whenever they could. The day after we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, the guys said, "Where were you last night? We had an attack and we were supposed to be up on the battle gun." They didn't have enough sailors to man the battle gun; it was what they called a 12-pounder, a 3-inch gun, so five of us had been selected to man that gun. I was the ammunition passer, and one of the fellows who had been in the Air Corps and had experience with machine guns, he was the gunner and he could maneuver the gun onto the target. We did have to set the fuse for whatever estimated elevation we thought the plane had. So anyway, we had an attack as we went through Gibraltar but we didn't lose any ships.

So we got into the Mediterranean Sea, and I've got to show you the map (picks up a case and looks through it). We got about a third of the way down the …. If I can find the map…. a third of the way down the Mediterranean Sea and we got into an attack one night… There it is (takes map from bag and opens it). This map shows the route that they took… (holds it toward camera) I don't think the people watching the video can see because of the small detail, but anyway… This is called Bazerti, that's in Algiers. It was late in the evening. Each evening we went out and manned the 3-inch gun for anti-aircraft. That was after we got into the Mediterranean Sea. The Germans still occupied Africa at that time, and they could also fly in from Sardinia and Sicily and so forth, so we had to be very alert. I think this was the 17th of April 1944. One of our officers, that was his birthday, and we were going to celebrate his birthday that evening. So the captain let us stay out on the bow until after the sun went down, because he said at sundown there was no more danger.

Well, the Germans had a new tactic, or a different tactic. They waited until the sun went down and they were on the coast of Africa and they had us silhouetted in the last rays of the sun, and they came over this 82 ship convoy with skip bombs, there were two planes. We didn't see them. I was down in the head, the bathroom, getting ready to do some business there, and all of a sudden the ship jumped sideways with a big bang. The captain, who had lost two ships going to Malta, thought we were torpedoed or skip bombed, and he rung

for stop engines. Then he ran out on the deck to see what had happened. Well, I knew something bad had happened—I thought we were torpedoed—so I ran back up to my cabin to get my helmet. I couldn't find it. So I finally ran on up to the gun to help defend ourselves. As soon as the captain saw what had happened, he rang full ahead, and then they started their zigzag pattern. You can imagine 82 ships in the dark having to zigzag and not run into each other; it was a difficult situation, and they were putting down smoke, too.

What had happened, these two German planes had come over and skip bombed, they sunk four ships. One of the ships that they hit was about a half a mile from us, and it was loaded with ammunition, plus all of the Army personnel it had on it. When that thing went off, that was the concussion that we had, and that's what made the captain think we'd been torpedoed. So anyway here's this big column of smoke going up, and we lost I don't know how many men. Excuse me just a moment (he gets up from chair and moves offscreen, returning with a paper). This has got the story. I never heard until, let's see, this is May of 2001, what had happened at this time. The Navy took pictures (holds up photo). This was that explosion that the Navy photographer took. Then it has an article about it. I wrote an article back to that particular magazine telling about what happened, and nothing ever came from it.

Anyway, it was a Dutch cruiser, I think, that went down, and in my recollection there was over 1000 men lost in that bombing accident. Well, needless to say we went into the zigzag pattern, and nothing more of consequence happened between there and Alexandria. We did go by the island of Malta; I was telling you that our captain, during WWII, he was supposed to supply Malta with supplies because it was under attack by Germans. They never lost it, but it was difficult to keep them supplied with food and ammunition. In trying to supply it, he had two cargo ships torpedoed or bombed; he survived and this was his third ship.

We finally came in sight of Alexandria and the Suez Canal. We went down through the Suez Canal. I don't know whether you know it or not, but the Suez Canal has no locks in it. The Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea are at the same elevation. It was quite strange: you'd be sailing along this canal, and you look across the desert and there's another ship coming your way, because the canal was not a straight line. Whenever two ships met in the canal, one of them had to pull over against the side and dock while the other one passed. We passed a lot of wreckage of ships that the Germans had sunk in the canal, and they had gotten them out of the way so they didn't obstruct the canal. That was a big job. We got down to the Bitter Lakes, which are part of the Canal system, so the captain said to us, "Anybody that wants to swim, we're going to pull up here for a while; we have to wait for other ships to come through." So we went down the gangway and swam in the Bitter Lakes. One thing that was interesting to me as a Christian, was as we went through the Red Sea, we had to go through the spot where the Children of Israel had to cross the Red Sea. They don't know where that point was, but we did have to pass through it. We got down to the south end--I can't think of the name of the town at the south end of the Suez Canal--but there we took on some fresh food and fruit, pineapples and things like that, and I think we took on some fresh water too at that point. Going down through the Red Sea, you can see land on both sides. I just want to review my memory here a minute (picks up and opens map, and studies it).

MR: How long did it take the 82 ships to get through, do you recall?

GB: As soon as we got south of Sicily, the bulk of the ships went up there, and we were by ourselves from that point on. We were going individually. The war was going on big time up in Italy and Sicily at that time, so the whole bulk of it left us at that point. I guess that's where the Apostle Paul visited too in his journeys, when he was sent up to Rome; he stopped at Malta.

Anyway (looking at map), there's the Gulf of Suez; that's about a hundred miles long; that was on the first of May according to my

map here. Suez was the name of the city at the south end of the canal. From the first of May, second of May, third of May, fourth of May, fifth of May we got down to Aden (where the warship was recently torpedoed by terrorists). We put into the bay there at Aden, and all the guys with their wares came out in their little boats to sell us stuff, but we weren't allowed… we spent the night there… we weren't allowed to go to shore. It was kind of warm there; I was surprised. In fact, the officers of the ship put on their whites, their shorts and everything. I was surprised at that. As we were crossing the Arabian Sea headed for Karachi, we saw this great big ship coming toward us. It was coming like crazy and didn't have an escort. I guess it was the Queen Elizabeth or the Queen Mary, I forget which one it was. It was being used as a troop ship at the time; it had been into Bombay, I guess. The reason we didn't go into Bombay was they'd had a tremendous explosion; an ammunition ship blew up in the harbor and leveled everything so they diverted us up to Karachi. We got up to Karachi on the 11th of May 1944. It would have been much better to have gone into Bombay but I didn't learn until later that they'd had this tremendous explosion; that's why we didn't go in there. We were sent, after we got off the ship to a camp called Camp Malir. It was a big airport, too. We spent a week there, and the water was a big problem. It's all desert in that area. So they saved all the wash water for irrigation. We went into Karachi one time (couldn't do that today, since it's in Pakistan, but at that time it was part of India) and that was my first… We had a sundae with mangrove, a fruit that I was not used to. That was quite a treat after the English diet all the way over from Norfolk.

We spent a week there, and finally they said we're going to send you over to Calcutta. So we talked to the RTO, the rail transportation officer, and he said "Guys, I'll give you a hint. It's awfully hot on these Indian trains," and you go in compartments, they don't have an aisle down the center; in fact you can't go from one compartment to another except in a station. So we were going to have a compartment for the six of us, and he said, "Rent a tub and put"--(I don't know if it was 50 or 100 pounds of) "ice in there—and they have about four fans in there, and turn them on it and that will be your air

conditioning." So the trip from Karachi up to Lahore--we got up there on the 19th of May--that was quite comfortable.

The trip from Lahore down to Calcutta was a different story. We had an old coach and they had a bunk on either side where a person could sleep. I have to tell you about the toilet accommodations. We had a private toilet in this compartment, in a cubbyhole about 3 feet square, and it had a hole about this big (gestures about 8 inches around) in the floor, and there were two pads so you were positioned correctly so you could hit the hole. I think we had to have our own toilet paper. I learned later that the Indians—at least the common people, were so poor they didn't use toilet paper, they always carried a little clay pot with them with water in it, and that was their toilet paper, what they cleaned themselves with. They never offered you anything with their left hand, always with their right hand, because their left hand was what they used to clean themselves with. So you never had anybody in India shake you with their left hand or give you anything with their left hand.

That was the hottest, sweatiest journey I ever made in my life, and that lasted about four days from Lahore down to Calcutta, and we went through Lucknow, which used to be the capital of India; Delhi is now the capital. We finally got down to Calcutta on the 23rd of May, and they sent us out to a replacement depot on the Ganges River--actually it was a branch called the Hooghly River. That camp was one of the worst camps I was ever in. We only had canned C-rations. I don't think the commanding officer had ever had any experience running a camp like that. I don't know how many hundreds of men and officers came into this camp. They didn't have any flushing toilets, they had outside privies; in fact, the privy was so heavily used that while I was there they had to clean it out, and I think what caused it to be cleaned out was that one time somebody threw a match into it from a cigarette and the gases exploded, so they decided it was time to clean it out. It was a very interesting method of how they cleaned it out. They moved the building away, and all the stools that the person sat on, and the low caste Indian got in and there was, it wasn't a scoop, it was a dish of some kind, a big dish.

They put that in a bucket and hand it up to the other guy on the edge, and he dumped it in the honey cart. They saved all the fecal matter because fertilizer was very hard to come by, and that is what they fertilized their rice fields with. And of course, the odors were quite overpowering. It was a difficult time, too, because when we first got there, they were using native dishwashers, and of course the microbes that cause diarrhea were spread all through the food. Just about everybody got diarrhea, and when you've got diarrhea and have to stand in line to go to this toilet, it's quite an experience. I think that's the reason why they finally replaced the commanding officer of this camp, so many of us got sick.

During this time, this was in May 1944, one of the big events in that theater, this was called the China-Burma-India theater, CBI. It was known as "Confusion Beyond Imagination." There was a great battle going on in Burma for the city of Myitkyina, in north Burma, it was the railhead of the railroad that goes the entire length of the country. The Japs had a large airfield there, and all of our planes that were flying to China had to go way north over the higher mountains because of this threat from Myitkyina. So General Stillwell decided that we'd better eliminate this airfield. The British that had been fighting further south in Burma, and he sent a group, the 5701st, they were known as Merrill's Marauders. Have you ever heard of Merrill's Marauders?

MR: Yes.

GB: Ok. He sent them in, and they were fighting during May while I was down at this repo depot, and they also sent in two battalions of engineers, the 109th and the 2-0-something, there were two battalions pulled off the road—the road that had been started in north Burma--and sent them down there to help. The Marauders got, besides being shot up… disease was very rampant in that area. Diarrhea, amoebic dysentery. They had another fever, I forget what it was called….

WC: Dengue fever?

GB: No, it wasn't dengue fever, it was…. I'll think of it after a while. Anyway, they were decimated, and they were coming back to the repo depot to get replacements. Happily 1331 is Combat Engineers, that's the MOS, military specialty for engineer officers. I happened to have a 1324, which was an administrative officer, I was happy to have that, so they didn't pick me, but they did pick a number of my buddies. They went up as replacements to these two engineer battalions. In the meantime, I'm sitting there in this depot and I thought, well, we better get some recreation for the fellows, the enlisted men. I went out around the country to look around and off to the west of the camp was a nice big pasture. So I went over there and scouted that, and there was a path that went diagonally right through this pasture from the main road over to a little village. I started walking across out on the field there, and everybody that had had a call of nature had gone off the path and done their job there. So I thought, no way can we use this field for baseball.

So then, too, I was able to visit a place called Chanagar (?). I didn't know the French had a territory right north of our camp, on the river, and they administered it. It was like Goa, which is in the western part of India, but this was an independent territory of the French--and the Free French were still controlling this city. So that was one of the things I did. Then the base quartermaster in Calcutta arranged for a tour of all the field grade officers and above of the Calcutta facilities. I was selected to guide the tour. I think I was given about 10 or 12 cargo trucks, and all were filled up with officers, and we went around to all the facilities, the King George docks, and the quartermaster slaughterhouses. This was an interesting thing. The Muslims, of course, can't touch pigs, but cows are not sacred to them. Hindus can touch pigs and slaughter them and dress them out, but they can't touch cows. So we hired the Hindus to slaughter the pigs and chickens, and the Moslems to slaughter and dress out the cows. And gathering those animals was very difficult in the province of Bengal because they're short of food, too. He told me, this fellow in charge, the major, how they collected the chickens. What they did was they'd give this guy so many rupees and put him on a train. He'd go way out in the country, get off the train, and he'd start

walking back toward Calcutta, and as he went along he'd buy chickens and he'd put them on a pole, and when he got back to Calcutta he'd turn them in, and that's how they got their chickens. We had chickens quite often. It was difficult for them to buy cattle, because the Hindus wouldn't sell their cows, they were sacred, but they bought them from the Moslems. And at that time, the Moslems and the Hindus were all intermixed and there was no problem, well I say no problem but just minor problems, until Mahatma Gandhi was helping smooth things out. Mahatma Gandhi at that time, when I was there, the British had put him in prison.

Anyway, during this time I talked to this major and told him that I had got a degree from an agricultural college, and could I help with their problems? He had a problem with food, with vegetables. He said one of their problems was the spoilage in the 300 mile trip from Siliguri, which was 300 miles north of Calcutta, down to the quartermaster depot in these steel cars; they had a lot of spoilage of the green beans and things like that, particularly the green beans. So he said, "Well we haven't had anybody that we could spare to go to Darjeeling where they raise these vegetables, so would you like to go up there?" I said, "Well sure, I'm just marking time here at the depot." Camp Angus was the name of the camp. And so he got orders for me to go up to Darjeeling. As I was coming down through the Red Sea, the officers on the Sam Gaudie had told me "If you ever get a chance, you've got to go up to Darjeeling. That's a wonderful place, it's about 8000 feet up in the mountains." So this was great for me, to get out of this hot humid… everybody got prickly heat, you know, it was hot and steamy all the time. So they cut orders for me to go up to Darjeeling. So I went up there and the people in charge took me all around, and they had about five different gardens where they grew these vegetables. You can't grow carrots and beans and cabbage and things like that down in the plains because it's too hot, they just won't grow there. So they grow them up in these gardens that I got to go around. While I was up in Darjeeling I went over to this other city called Kalimpong, the railhead, so to speak, of all the wool coming out of Tibet. And just about everybody that comes down from Tibet comes through Kalimpong. I had a Jeep, and I

drove from Darjeeling over to Kalimpong, and the grade is 3-1/2 to one. That is quite steep; you have to be in four wheel drive and low range to negotiate that kind of road. I don't know how the civilian cars ever made it.

That was very interesting. Darjeeling sits on a mountainside, and you can look up and see Mount Everest from there. The other mountain that's so prominent is Kanchenjunga. It is the third highest mountain in the world, and about 800 feet short of Mount Everest. It's a spectacular sight. You can sit on this mountainside and look almost from the valley the whole 28,000 feet that Kanchenjunga is. It's snow covered all year round. After that experience, they finally sent me back to stay there for a while. There wasn't a whole lot I could do. The British were very efficient, in my opinion, in growing and transporting the vegetables down to Siliguri and putting them in rail cars. The only thing I thought that could be done would be a different container for the beans. They had kind of a wicker basket about this big around at the top (gestures) and this tall, and they could stack them, but they were so flexible there was no ventilation, and that was part of the problem. So I suggested maybe they could have a more rigid basket. The guy in charge said, "We've got this refugee camp over here in northeast Bengal, and they make baskets." They are refugees, Indians that came out of Burma when the Japs came in. The Burmese turned against these Indians and killed a lot of them, and their only solution was to get back into India. That was a really difficult proposition. They sent me up to this camp. There must have been about 5000 or 6000 refugees in this camp, Indians who'd been run out of Burma. I explained the proposition to the head man, and he said "Yeah, we can make baskets for you guys," and they did. I think I've got a picture of the basket making. (Turns to look for picture, picks up photo album and pages through it) They made a series of baskets, and these are some of the baskets they made for us. (Shows photo of baskets) The upshot of it was that it was a two-way thing. It wasn't a one-way thing, like a throwaway. They couldn't afford to transport it back once they used it, so that project didn't pan out at all.

After that, I went back and I got orders to report to Shalong, which is a resort area similar to Darjeeling, it's in the Cassi (?) Hills. I was about to go up there, and I had a terrible case of athlete's foot, and the doctor was about to put me in the hospital. I said "Look, I've been almost eleven months here trying to get an assignment and here's a chance for me to get an assignment, so don't send me to the hospital." So he gave me some IBS, it was iodine and potassium permanganate and something else all in a liquid; it was very purple, and you paint it on your toes and it dried up the athlete's foot, so I got rid of the athlete's foot.

But anyway, I went by train from Calcutta up to Ledo, and you get up to a place called Parbatipur, and the gauge of the train changes from broad gauge, which was about five feet, down to a meter, 39 inches or something like that. So you have to change from one style coach to another style coach, and I finally got up to Ledo and reported in and the personnel officer says, after I'd been there for a day, "We're going to assign you to the 330th Engineers. So they put me in a weapons carrier, a ¾ ton truck, the next day and sent me up to the 330th Engineers which were working on a road. I forget the mileage of where the camp was located. But right across from our camp was a Chinese camp of engineers. They are very pragmatic people. A fellow gets wounded and is not able to carry a gun, they send him back to the rear areas and put him to work. And these engineers that were across the river from us were building wooden bridges for us. Our people cut the trees and so forth and drug them out to the edge of the road, and the Chinese with their trucks load them on and carried them down to the bridge site, and--all with hand tools--hewed out the timbers for these wooden bridges.

We had to at that time boil all our water; I remember this distinctly. They made me mess officer. We ran the water through our purification system, adding chlorine, and filtered out all the solid matter, then we put it in a GI can and boiled it. And after we boiled it we put it in some more GI cans and let it cool down, then after it cooled down we put it in the Lister bag and added the chlorine tablets. We had 5 parts per million of chlorine in the water, and this

Lister bag was suspended there in the shade, and as the water oozed through the fabric, it had a somewhat cooling effect. Generally the water was air temperature, at least 80 or 90 degrees, plus 5 parts per million chlorine, and that was the water we had to drink.

I've got to tell about the laundry part. We didn't have any laundry facilities, and we were always sweaty and dusty--dust all the time--so your clothes got dirty and dusty and about all we could do… the individual soldier had to wash his own clothes, but the officers hired one of the enlisted men to wash their clothes. Finally we got to a point, I guess in December of 1944, when the quartermaster would take our clothes and they had a laundry, but when it came back you didn't necessarily get back the same clothes you sent. You just had to pick out something that would fit. But even that was great, to have clean clothes to wear.

Also, we had a lot of C rations, canned goods, stew and hash and powdered milk, and we were getting Indian coffee. That was terrible stuff. In fact the only way you could drink it, when it so hot you couldn't hardly stand it, when it got cool it was bitter. It was along in 1945 before we could begin to get American coffee; of course, that came from South America.

We were down where the peacocks were. Peacocks were native to that area, and elephants, wild elephants, and tigers. Bengal tigers were very common in that area. We'd see their footprints in the sand. I never saw a live one; they're very skittish. I've got to tell about one of our enlisted men when we were stationed at mile 273. We had to send a contingent of truck drivers to haul engineering materials, and while he was in this camp--I thought it was halfway up to Ledo in Burma—but later, some of the stories I've read, like in this magazine I was showing you, they said it occurred in the Ledo area. One of my men was in a basha with two other truck drivers, and this tiger came into the basha, and it struck this guy in this jungle hammock and knocked him out of the hammock, and it ripped his thigh open with his claw. The others jumped up and scared him off. It was an old tiger, I forget what they called them, not a rogue, but

one that is so old he can't catch live game anymore so he has to catch humans, which are easy to catch. Anyway, they ran the tiger off and the sergeant shot it with a tommy gun and killed it. But the poor boy got infection in that leg and he never came back to camp. They had to send him back home. That tiger, in digging out carrion, had all kinds of infection in his claws.

MR: When you were with the 330th Engineers, what was your primary mission?

GB: We were road building. We were building a road from Ledo all the way to Kunming. That was our mission. I don't know how many engineer units…. there were a lot of engineer units building this road. It was from Ledo over the mountains, up over two ridges up to 4000 feet, and down through the Hookong Valley, down to Myitkyina, down to Baumo, and then from Baumo over into China.

WC: Is that what they referred to as the Ledo road?

GB: Yeah, that was the Ledo Road. It was later named the Stilwell Road, but I always think of it as the Ledo Road. Some units were involved in bridge building using bailey bridge--for the bigger rivers they had to use bailey bridge. For the smaller streams, we built fixed wooden bridges, H20 bridges--that means it will take a 20 ton load--and we built a number of wooden bridges.

MR: Did you stay with this Chinese unit most of that time?

GB: No. We had three sizes of culverts, and of course drainage was a very important factor in building this road, because we had 200 inches of rain a year, and most of that came in a five month period from April until September. They put in these culverts, 6 foot and 3 foot, and they came in halves and were bolted together. That was a manual labor job, and the Chinese did most of this. We would be given a 20-mile stretch of road to build. They had a [unclear] trace that they'd made with a bulldozer that allowed us to get down there with our trucks and our equipment. And then we cleared the right of

way about a hundred feet either side of the center line. We had scrapers that would hold eight yards, tractor-drawn scrapers. We finally got some Letourneus, and they held twelve yards, they were motorized. They could get up and go fifteen miles an hour, whereas the tractor only could go maybe 5 miles an hour, clacking along the road. So when we got those Letourneau earthmovers, we could move earth like crazy. Most of it was clay, I'd say all of it was clay, and there were enormous trees that we had to cut down, and some of them we dynamited to get the roots out of the ground. If you cut them off, then you had some time getting the stump out; it was easier to load it up with dynamite and blow it out. This was the first time in my experience that I ever saw a chain saw. They were two man chainsaws, they weren't single man chainsaws like you have today. But that was the first time, in 1944, that I ever saw a chainsaw. They weren't too reliable, it was hard to keep them running. Anyway earth moving was the big thing that we did in Company B of the 330th Engineers. There were six companies and a headquarters and service company in this regiment, and they were one of the primary builders of the Ledo Road, the 330th Engineers.

We moved from the first camp I was sent to, this unit had been there since 1943, and they had had experience in Churchill, Manitoba, before they came to the CBI. Anyway, we moved down to Namtee and they had a bakery down there so we got bread. While I was down there, I got some souvenirs. I think I've got an item here, I'll dig it out (leaves seat to search in suitcase.) Here it is, this is a souvenir I got out of one of the railroads (holds it up). It's a [sign on a] piece of tin, and the thing that I was interested in: "The public are requested to report to the district traffic superintendent or to the traffic manager any case of incivility on the part of the railway staff." I was quite interested in that.

I was still mess officer there, and the natives came to our dump. We had dug out a hole with a bulldozer and anything we didn't want we dumped in there. And all of our tin cans and stuff, the natives came and salvaged those because they didn't have anything. But in regard to the railroad, when we got to Namtee, I was discouraged that we

didn't have anyplace to wash. At the first camp, we just got in the river and washed. And it was November and December, it gets cold in northern Burma. It doesn't freeze, but it's cold. At Namtee we had little pot bellied stoves in our tents to keep warm. I decided that we should have a shower for the men, so I went to these railroad cars, they had pipes in them, all kinds of pipes. One of our guys was a plumber, so I took him along with me and we got enough pipes to make a coil. The problem was how do you make a coil out of straight pipe? We got a stump that had a small tree beside it, and we put one end of the pipe in there and we twisted around the stump. We got the welders to weld this coil into a 50-gallon drum and we could thread three in one end of it, in fact both ends of it. And we got a burner that would burn gasoline and that gave us the fuel to heat it, and we had another tank that held the hot water. So we built some wooden pieces to stand on while we showered. We went down to a company that did mechanical work and lathe work, and he rigged us up some showerheads and some valves out of beer cans. When the guys could take a shower, they were so happy. It was always dusty on the road in the dry season, because it's dry in the wintertime, and always dusty. When they could get in there and wash that dust off, and the dirt and sweat, they were happy. So that was one accomplishment that we made at Namtee. And we carried that with us all the way down to our next camp.

By that time, the battle of Myitkyina had ended on the second of August of 1944. The name of the major that I got acquainted with in Calcutta was M. C. Coop. He was a Texan, a real fine fella. He brought, when the battle of Myitkyina was over, he came up with a plane load of fried chicken and ice cream to the survivors of the battle, and those guys were sure appreciative of that.

Anyway, to get back to Namtee, finally we completed the twenty-mile stretch of road that we were supposed to build, and it was an all-weather road. The road was 20 foot wide and had one foot of gravel on it, and we got the gravel out of the rivers that were nearby. We just used [unclear] gravel, and it had a lot of boulders in it, and it made it rough going down the road. Finally what they did, by their

grading process, they got all these big rocks off to the side and then they brought portable rock crushers, pulled by a truck—they weren't very big—but the guys took a shovel and shoveled them up into this gas powered thing, and that gave us crushed rock to throw back onto the road. In the dry season, it was dusty as could be, but in the wet season when it was raining that was one of the best roads you ever saw because the water held all the fines together, and we graded the section that we had built. We ran two graders out ten miles one way in the morning and they came back and ate lunch—dinner is what we called it—and went ten miles the other way. We always kept roads up in fine shape.

The next camp was at mile 273, south of Myitkyina, and we had to cross the Irrawaddy River. The Irrawaddy River is—I'd liken it to the Tennessee River. I don't know if you've ever been to the Tennessee River—

MR: Yes.

GB: --and it comes off of glaciers. The little feeder creeks were nice and warm, we could swim in them, but you get in the Irrawaddy and it was icy cold. But it had so much fungi in it that the regimental surgeon prohibited us from swimming in it anymore because the guys got so much fungus in their ears. I went fishing a number of times with cratering charges and so forth, I won't dig out the pictures, but I have pictures showing some of the fish we caught in the Irrawaddy River.

MR: Could you eat those fish?

GB: Yes. And I've got to tell you, at mile 273 we had tremendous fishing experience. There is a river comes in there south of Myitkyina called Nam Tabet. It's a big river. We knew there were fish in it, so (we'll save thirty minutes for Korea) I got the guys that were interested in fishing together and said "Hey guys, let's go fishing." So we took two blocks of TNT and he put a fuse, an electric cap, a fuse that was about this long. One guy that smoked cigarettes was

going to set them off. The rest of us stripped down to our skivvies, and each of us had a sandbag to put the fish in. And we went down to this place where it was rocky and the water was deep. The guy had two different lengths of fuses, and he lit them and tossed them in and of course they almost went off simultaneously, and up boiled all the big fish. There was a fish about that long (gestures about two feet or more) with great big scales; the scales were bigger than our thumbnails. I'd never seen such big scales. And the rest of us jumped in with our sandbags, and of course the water was over our heads. We were treading water trying to put these slick fish into the sandbags, and had we just used our head and gone down the river about 50 yards, the water got shallow, we could have stood there and picked up the fish as they came along. But here we stood here and tried to keep our head above water and try to put these slick fish in the bags. We must have had at least 14 sandbags, and we never caught all the fish that we killed or stunned, but I took at least seven bags back to camp. It was so heavy we knew we couldn't carry them, that one guy went back to camp and got the jeep and brought it back and we put them in there. Well we got back to camp about eleven o'clock, and the mess sergeant said, "I'm not going to clean those fish, or have my guys clean them, so if you guys want them cleaned you've got to clean them yourselves." Well, at the time I had no skill in cleaning fish; the only way I knew was to scale them. So we said, all right we'll eat lunch and after lunch we'll clean the fish and have them for supper. So that's what we did. And there was more fish there than the company of 200 men could eat. What was left, we threw over in the dump. The next morning, as I was walking by there, here was this native out there. He'd picked up these fish that we'd thrown in there the day before. And you know, in that hot climate there, they had to be starting to spoil. But what made me feel bad about it was all the fish that we killed, these native people--I don't know how they caught them. I went back and tried that hole again, and there wasn't a single fish in it. I felt bad I'd taken the food away from these people who'd had a steady supply of fish. That was the fishing expedition.

At that time, this had to be in 1945 in March, many convoys were coming by going to Kunming. Fifty to a hundred trucks at a time, carrying all kinds of things, weapons, machine guns, cannons, explosives, food, whatever, plus the trucks. Once they got there, they were turned over to the Chinese. They had completed this road in January of 1945. I've got a picture of the first convoy that went to Kunming. I stood on the side of the road with my little camera and took a picture.

From there in April of 1945 the road had been completed so they sent Company B up to Myitkyina. Myitkyina—did I show you where it's located? (Picks up map and holds it up to camera) It's right there. It's the railhead of the railroad that goes from Rangoon north. It goes through Mandalay and all the other big cities in Burma. I've got to tell you about the lumbering. Our camp was located on a riverbank south of Myitkyina, on the edge of Myitkyina, in a teakwood forest. The teakwood at that time was not, the trees were not very big, they weren't ready for harvest. You had to wait until the trees were about this big (gestures with hands) before you harvested them. There was a lot of teakwood in the central and north Burma, and one of the fellows that I got acquainted with at the US Typhus Commission was a guy by the name of Jack Gersham. He was known as Burma Jack. He had been recruited by the OSS to fight the—(gets up and looks through case for something, doesn't find it). Anyway, Burma Jack was a buyer for the Burma Teakwood Company of Bombay. and in order to harvest this wood, they have to girdle the tree a year ahead of time and kill it. Then after it sets there a year and dries, they go and cut it down and cut it up into logs, and the water oxen snake it out to the edge of a stream and then the elephants stack it up in a big pile. They stack it in such a way that when the rains come in the spring they can pull out a key thing and the whole thing would roll into the stream, when the stream's high enough to float them down the river. That's the process how they do it. And the put a special mark on each log so that they know how to give credit as to whose log it was. It's floated down the Irrawaddy River to Mandalay, and then they have a big boom across the river, and that collects the logs. They saw it up and ship it out of the country, or to where it's used.

Teakwood is a very dense and hard wood, and many of the ships in that area in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea and so forth, the native ships were all made of teakwood because they don't rot. Many of the decks of modern ships today have teakwood decks. The frames of the more modern homes in Burma are made from teakwood because the termites don't eat it. I'll give you a sample you can take with you.

When I was going to come home, I had a quartermaster officer in charge of the regiment, the battalion, and he came up to my company and I was telling him about the teakwood I had. For some favor that I had done for somebody in the lumberyard, he gave me enough teakwood, as big as this sofa is right here, in eight foot lengths, this wide (shows about 3 inches between two fingers), 3/4 dressed. I told this officer "If you ship that home for me, I'll give you half of it." And he said "That's a deal." I want the Burmese bell, I've got a Burmese Buddhist bell with all kinds of inscriptions on it, left over from the fighting in Myitkyina, I said that includes the bell too. So he shipped it home for me. After I got discharged I got this shipment. It must have weighed 400 pounds. It was my intention to make some furniture out of it, but I was so poor after I got out that I never had enough money to have the furniture made, so I still have pieces of the teakwood left.

Anyway, when I went back in 1997 to Myitkyina, I was surprised that the jungles were all gone. They'd cut all the wood, it had been decimated. At that time, there was only local ferries to get across the Irrawaddy, and in 1997 the Burmese government was building a big bridge to get across the river so they could trade with the Chinese. Well, anyway, while I was there in Myitkyina we built a Coke plant. The guy that was in charge ran it, ran off about six crates of bottled Coke, and that was the end of the run, because the war in Japan was over. This was the second of September, declared over in 1945, so they were going to dismantle it, ship it back to Rangoon and over to Japan. So he and I decided we'd go on a trip and we took several extra GI cans of gasoline with us, and we wanted to go up to Superbon (?), which is way north, so we did. That was quite a trip.

We had to cross four different streams, and the natives, I guess the British at that time had set up these ferries, and they, the first three, were made of gasoline drums big enough to get the jeep on the ferry, and then they pulled it across by hand. I don't know if I've got a picture….. (picks up photo album and finds a photo, which he shows). You've heard about the road to Mandalay?

MR: Yes.

GB: Well, there's a marker that shows how to get to Mandalay. This picture was a baptism that I took in 1997 when I was there in Myitkyina. I was trying to find a ferry, wasn't I? Let's see…. This is a picture of Burma Jack—

MR: Which picture is he in?

GB: This is him, Jack Gersham. (Points to another picture) These are some of the boys that were in my company. He was the OSS agent. He was sent out to assassinate collaborators of the Japanese. And they had a bounty on Jack, the Japanese. I forget how many rupees plus a sack of salt for capturing him.

WC: Do you know what happened to him? Obviously he survived?

GB: Yes. He survived the war. For a while he was an animal control officer in the province of Assam, and his job was go out and kill the rogue elephants. Because the natives had taken away so much jungle from the elephants, that the elephants had to have something to eat, and they'd come in and tear up the crops of the natives. So he used an 8-gauge shotgun to kill these rogue elephants. He sent me a Christmas card one time and was telling me about this one rogue elephant that he was out to kill. The elephant was charging him and he shot and him and missed him. The elephant was still coming at him, so—it was a double barrel—so he stepped behind a tree and the elephant went by, and when the elephant was turning around to come back again he shot him. He said, don't try to shoot him with a 3006—it won't stop him. You've got to use an 8-gauge single slug to

kill him, to penetrate their skin. That was his job. Because he was part British he lost his job and retired with his second wife to London, and he finally died there. I've got a picture of him shortly before he died. (Pages through album) I made a trip to Kunming too, in 1946.

MR: When you went back in 1997, were there any remains left of any of the camps you were in?

GB: No. I missed a good opportunity there. Yeah, here's one of the ferries that we were crossing (holds up photo) on that trip to Superban (?), up in northern Burma. And Jack Gersham, in some of the talks that we had, said George, after the war let's go hunting up there. And we were never able to do it.

MR: When did you go home to the states?

GB: I went home in December 1945. I left India on December 31, from Karachi. We flew from Java to Karachi, and the guy went around the Taj Mahal so we could look at the Taj Mahal. I left there and got back in February to Seattle, and back to Chicago and got discharged.

MR: What was your final rank?

GB: I was one of the longest-term first lieutenants you ever did see. (Laughs) Because of being in different places on different assignments, I missed out. When I got discharged, because of my efficiency record they promoted me one grade. So I got out as a Captain. And then in 1950 I was still in the reserves. I'd signed up for the reserves; I figured it wouldn't hurt to have a nice pension, you know, so I was going to stay in the reserves. In June 1950 the North Koreans came down, so Truman decided we're going to defend the South Koreans. So he sent our people over there to fight the North Koreans, and of course, we began to get beat up badly, and had to call up the reserves. There weren't enough regular Army to stem the tide.

About that time, this was in October 1950, I had signed up to take an advanced course in Fort Belvoir because I wanted to up my ability to be promoted and get more training. So I had orders to go to Fort Belvoir for this three-month course. At this time I was in a gardening enterprise with my stepfather in North Alabama. I was winding up my affairs to go to Fort Belvoir, and I get by mail a set of orders rescinding my orders to go to Fort Belvoir and ordering me to Fort Bragg to the 20th Engineers. I hit the ceiling. I had been in the inactive reserve, which means that they couldn't touch me, call me to active duty. In order to go, they had to put me on the active reserves, so that's how they did it. So I got in the car and went down to Decatur, Alabama, to talk to the reserve officer in charge there, and I was boiling. And he looked at this and said, "Well George, there were six other guys ahead of you that were called, and they got their Congressman to get them off. Can you get your Congressman to get you off?" I said, "Gee I don't know anybody, and why should I do that?" He said, "Well, that's the only way you're going to get off."

So I decided, well ok, I'll take my lumps. In November of 1950 I reported to Fort Bragg to the 20th Engineers and was made headquarters service company commander. We went through two training cycles there with draftees and retreads. Then in September of 1951, I got orders to go to Korea. I had to send my wife back to Battle Creek, Michigan, where I had a home, and I reported out to Camp Stallman; this was in October. They put me on a ship and sent me over to Japan, and I got over to Tokyo to one of the camps there. And the orders came through for me to be courier to go to Taegu. I thought man, this is going to be great, because I'd heard all the stories about how we'd got the pants shot off us in Korea, and frozen and everything like that. So I thought well gee, this is going to be great.

Well all the courier was, just to carry the orders for all the other guys, because they went over by boat, and I got to fly over to Taegu, and that was the Headquarters of the Army at the time. When I got there, I got an assignment to the Korean Military Advisory Group, KMAG,

and finally they sent me down to Pusan to be a post engineer of KMAG rear. I was there for a while, and then one day they sent me down orders that said we're going to send you over to Koje Island. They've got 45,000 PWs there in compounds.

I went over there and relieved the guy who I was replacing. I was made Advisor to the 202nd Engineer Construction Battalion. I had to go back up to Taegu to sign for the jeep and other property that this guy had, but while I was there—tomorrow is the 7th of May—fifty years ago on the 7th of May the PWs captured the American general of the camp. Can you imagine? That was really when the stuff hit the fan. It made us look terrible. Of course, the reason that happened, we ran such a sloppy operation that it could happen. The way it happened was the general went down to this compound 76 to listen to some complaints that the people had, the honchos in the camp, and while General Dodd and his MP lieutenant colonel were standing there at the gate, the detail that carried out the honey bucket detail, these were half drums, they'd just been down to the wharf and dumped the contents in the bay and had come back. The PWs had timed this so while Dodd and this lieutenant colonel were standing there at the gate, they surrounded them bodily, and there were two GIs with M1s on either side that could have shot them, but the General told them not to shoot. If they had, with their M1s and their extra ammunition, they could have shot everyone there, but I guess Dodd was afraid he was going to get hit in the firefight because all they had was the clubs, the crosspieces that they carried the honey buckets with. That's all they had. And the PWs carried them on in to the compound. It took them 7 days to negotiate his release. And at that time, this flak took precedence over any other stuff in the newspapers in the United States.

They replaced Dodd with a fellow called Coulson, and he negotiated the release and finally because of concessions that Coulson made, they replaced him with a fellow named Hayden Boltner(?) who had been General Stilwell's second in command. This is some of the fighting that took place (holds up some clippings), and some of the things that happened. Afterward it took them about thirty days to

decide what exactly what they were going to do and put their plan into action. The PWs were flying their own flag (points out flag in photo). We call it the Texaco flag—it's the North Korean flag—they were flying their own flag and doing their own thing, and our people didn't even dare go into these compounds. The PWs controlled what went on in these compounds.

Finally, the day came that they were going to settle this issue with the PWs. They broke up Compound 76, and they had new compounds built. The unit that I was with, the 202nd [unclear] engineers, had a great deal to do with building the new compounds. The new compounds held only a maximum of 500 PWs; the other compounds held 6000 and 7000, and the US military didn't have control inside, period. The PWs made up [unclear] of barbed wire. They were about this long (gestures about 3 feet), and they wrapped cloth around the handles so they could use that as a weapon, and they also made spears. The US was very generous in trying to teach them what to do, and try to give them a trade or something. Let's see if I have a picture…. Here (shows picture): this was out of *Life Magazine*. Here's one of the spears. They cut that out of a gasoline drum, put it on a stick and wrapped it with cloth. This shows one of these spears; in fact, the communists killed, I think, eleven of the people who were against them, and they found the bodies in Compound 76 when they went in there to clear it out. But they broke them down, and all the compounds in that area they put into new compounds, and they marched them down the road in, say 50 in a group, had them strip off all their clothes, and they went in bare naked into the new compound and issued them clothes in there. So that's how they did it.

I was advisor to this group until… We moved over to the mainland, over in Pusan, in August. I was sent up to the front lines shortly thereafter near the Main Line Resistance, the MLR, and that's where I met this Chuck Wade. He was my commanding officer, and I was advisor to—I can't remember the unit I was advisor to. We were up there where the… You could see the flash of the big guns at night, where they were shelling the Chinese, and I was there until

December of 1952, and they gave me a choice of signing up indefinitely and so I said "Well, I'm not going to sign up indefinitely." So they said, "Well we're going to send you home." So I got home in February of 1953, and that was kind of the end of the story.

I have one little side story I'd like to tell. While I was on Koje Island, there was a fellow there, one of the interpreters that I had… let's see if I can find a picture of it. This is Mr. Chang, and this was his sister. You know the story of Joseph and Mary…

MR: Will you hold that up?

GB: Yes. Joseph and Mary who went down to Egypt? He claimed, Joseph claimed that this Mary was his sister so the Egyptians wouldn't kill him. He claimed that this woman here was his sister. Well as it turned out, it was his wife. What happened was when he was evacuated from Honam, he was North Korean, he was a college student. He speaks five languages. He got on this boat. This woman's husband went back to get something else, and while he was gone, the ship, the LST took off and they didn't know what happened to him. He was dumped with all the other refugees down on Koje Island. This woman had two young children, two daughters. He looked after them and they all lived in the same dwelling together. I went down to their dwelling one time and saw it. It had a dirt floor and everything, and times were hard for them. Later when he was up in Seoul, the husband showed up, but he wouldn't take his wife back because she'd been living with this guy. Eventually he married this woman, as a common law wife, but then he wanted to come to this country. I got him a scholarship at a horticultural college in west Chicago, and he went there. This was way back… (shows another photo) These are her two daughters, and they had two sons together. This guy (points to a man in another photo) was her husband. He showed up in Seoul but wouldn't take her back. So Chang unofficially married her. While I was in Lombard, Illinois, he wanted to come to this country, and I got him a scholarship to this school, and he came over and brought his wife. It turned out that that was

his sister—it wasn't his sister at the time. He said, I'd like to get a Christian marriage, so he asked me to arrange a marriage for him. So I went to one of the Lion's Club members who was a minister, and I told him the story of this guy, and he said well, yes, I'll perform the marriage (shows wedding photos). So, you can see we had a nice marriage for him. (Laughs) In fact, he just called me by telephone last night.

MR: Where does he live?

GB: He lives in Chicago. He's had quite a varied career. He's quite a politician himself. He was the prime student they had, and they hired him after he got through. He worked there two years, and he decided he'd go into business for himself, and he had an import business there in Chicago. (Shows another photo) There he is with Adlai Stevenson. Anyway, he had this import business and he finally sold that and started a restaurant in Division Street, I believe it was. The restaurant did quite well for a while, and eventually so many Korean, Filipinos, and Taiwanese…. He had this beautiful restaurant. I went there several times to visit him, and he had a laundromat in conjunction, too. When he retired--he's ten years younger than I—he's 75. He finally sold that. When I was living in about a $40,000 home, he has a $75,000 home in the western suburbs, so he did quite well. As I say, he spoke five languages: Korean of course, English, Japanese, French, and German. He was quite a well-educated fellow. He was a pre-med student when the North Koreans invaded, and he had to leave. He was a Christian so he knew he didn't dare stay there. So he's living there, and his son, the one son that done well, Douglas, was a top student. He went to the schools there in Lombard—I don't know if he was valedictorian or not—but he did so well academically that he got a scholarship and got degree as a medical doctor. He finally got to be in charge of a number of hospitals in the Chicago suburbs.

MR: Do you ever stay in contact with anyone else during your time in the service?

GB: Yes, one of the corporals. I was trying to rent a house one time in Lombard, and a state policeman was looking at the house the same time I was. I asked him did they know this particular fellow. "Oh yeah, I know him." So I said, "Can I have his address?" So one time when I had a conference down in St. Louis I stopped by to see him. And another time, the commanding officer I had while I was at Mile 273—I can't think of his first name—he came to see me two different times, and finally he died here about two years ago.
A number of fellows… The commanding officer who was in command of Company B, when I first got into Burma, he lived over here in a city in New York State. I went over to see him and he'd died two years before. That's the way it happens.

Just yesterday I got this picture in the mail from this woman. Here's the picture (shows photo); it's about seven guys on a boom truck. I don't remember the guys at all, but I remember the boom truck!

MR: Are you in that picture?

GB: No, I'm not in that picture at all. Her name and address is here. She looked after this fellow Arthur Lewis--he was a sergeant in charge of construction--and she said in the letter that she looked after him for fourteen years after he retired and went from Massachusetts to Florida. So I have these things happen all the time.

MR: Well thank you very much for your interview.

GB: Well, it's been a pleasure.