

**Harrodsburg Tank Battalion in the Philippines:
Survivors of the Bataan Death March**

Interview with William Gentry

June 16, 1961

Conducted by William Joseph Dennis

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Tape 17 A 16 (a-b)

REEL NO. 10

June 16, 1961

WILLIAM GENTRY speaking:

This is William Gentry, member of the 192nd Tank Battalion, Company "D." My rank at the time of discharge was Captain, and my Army serial number was 404976. I joined the 38th Tank Company of the Kentucky National Guard in 1936 as a private, then under the command of Bacon R. Moore, who was captain commanding the company, later became battalion commander at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

The unit served in state duty and as flood duty in Frankfort, Kentucky, taking over the state prison until the summer following the flood and also served in Harlan County, Kentucky on strike duty for six months keeping peace and order. In November 1940, we were called to federal service and reported to Fort Knox, Kentucky. Prior to leaving our hometown, we were on active duty in the town for a week or more before we left for Fort Knox. At this period of time, anyone that belonged to the unit, on request, would be given a discharge. Anyone wishing to join with the unit and go to Fort Knox were enlisted at that time. So all the men who left Harrodsburg, Kentucky were volunteers; they were not compelled to go.

Again, later on, in our service and Camp Polk, Louisiana, we were given the opportunity to transfer to other units if we so desired. And again, the sixty-six who had left Harrodsburg going to the Philippine Islands, volunteered for the second time for the mission we had to accomplish. At Camp Polk, Louisiana, we lost men due to an age restriction which was place upon us by the War Department, and men over a certain age were transferred, without any consideration, to other units. When we left Harrodsburg, we reported to a new containment area at Fort Knox, Kentucky. It was the first containment buildings built at the start of the World War

II campaign. When we arrived at Fort Knox, the buildings were not complete, and the entire area was covered with a sea of mud.

This mud posed quite a problem for us in the beginning, because the mud would be six inches deep on the barracks floors. The latrines were not complete, and we used latrines dug in the yard until the construction crews would finish the latrines for us. Arriving at Fort Knox at approximately the same time were the units, a unit from Janesville, Wisconsin; a unit from Maywood, Illinois; and a unit from Fort Clinton, Ohio. All four of these units had been the tank company of the special troops of the old Square Division. This is at the time the change was made from the Square Division to the Triangular Division, and the tank companies – composing part of the special troops – were no longer needed and were formed into a battalion at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Each unit wished to retain its original identity as a unit and permission was granted by the War Department to form a Tank Battalion with four letter companies, instead of three letter companies. Under this set-up, instead of one of the companies becoming headquarters company and the other three becoming the three letter companies, we retained the identity of “A,” “B,” “C,” and “D” Companies and formed a Headquarters Company with a nucleus of men from each of the companies. At the time I reported to Fort Knox, Kentucky, I was a Staff Sergeant with the Company. I had just finished a communications course at Fort Benning, Georgia the preceding summer, having gone there in January of 1940 and finished the middle of June of 1940.

We had just completed the Wisconsin maneuvers and had readied our equipment when we were called to active duty. At Fort Knox, we immediately enrolled as many men as possible in all the schools on the post in order to give them additional training. At one time our company strength was so low that even I, as a Staff Sergeant, was doing latrine duty in order to take care of the company situation. It was in December of 1940 that I made application for an examination

for commission, other men in the unit desired to take the examination also so they filed for the examination. At this particular time, the number of officers available on the post at Fort Knox was very low. In fact, there were some companies that did not have a full-time officer. On the post at that particular time, some officers commanded as many as three companies as second lieutenants. So due to the fact that the post was short on officers, this thing was opened to every one of the first three enlisted grades so that they could take the examination. As far as I know, there were only six that ever received the commission under this method.

After receiving my commission, I was assigned to Headquarters Company, which was being formed and, for some time, for several weeks, was commanding officer of Headquarters Company, until Captain Nelson was transferred in to our unit and took command of Headquarters Company. I served as battalion communication officer, also handled the training of all of our men in communications. To save time, I attended the communications school at Fort Knox, also taught electronics in the school at Fort Knox. Also helped train new recruits which we received by the Selective Service System. In fact, the battalion received the first group of Selective Service men to arrive at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and the training of Selective Service men was started by a nucleus of men drawn from the original companies of the battalion which were set up in an area some thousand yards away from the battalion are in _____ tents. And our men trained the new recruits at Fort Knox, Kentucky until the summer of 1941.

The first recruits arrived in December of 1940. From the new men coming in under the Selective Service system, we were able to handpick the men that we wanted in our battalion to fill us up to battalion strength. Since we had the records of their civilian experience, as well as the opportunity to train them the way that we wanted them trained, we were able to build a battalion of extremely good men.

When we arrived at Fort Knox, each tank company had two tanks which had been issued to them two or three years prior to reporting to active duty. These eight tanks comprised our entire armor when we arrived at Fort Knox. We were given a few old worn trucks.

Interviewer: Were those General Stewarts'? 37-millimeter tanks?

Gentry: Yes, right. Well let's take it back. One was on old Mae West tank which had a fifty and a thirty caliber on it and the other had a thirty-seven, so we had one of each. And the eight tanks were all we had, and the quartermaster gave us some old trucks which we could haul rations in when we reached Fort Knox. This comprised all of our vehicles. Of course, we had plenty of rifles and pistols and machine guns that we had in our armories that we took along with us. But at Fort Knox, the only way that we could get a tank would be to take what had been salvaged by some other unit. We made frequent visits to the salvage yard and pulled in as junk in the area, and with the help of a three-pole circus tent and a few coke stoves, we started tearing this junk apart, completely disassembling it. And by drawing from the ordnance replacement parts, we reassembled enough tanks that we had almost a full complement of tanks for the Louisiana maneuvers.

Now, these tanks were old but they would run, and we had one-turret tanks and two turret tanks and we didn't care much which. But at least we had tanks to work with. Now one of the things that we did have that was an asset to us was the fact that we had an unlimited number of men with real good mechanical ability. Many of them were mechanics in civilian life, working in garages and other types of skilled trade. Even though they didn't have garage experience, they had experience in operating equipment, such as bulldozers, all types of tractors and knew how to

take care of equipment and how to repair it. Of course, we sent as many men as we could to the armored school at Fort Knox which was being started at that particular time.

Our particular company, from time to time, were, had been able to send men to Fort Knox and train with the ordnance at Fort Knox for short periods of time – six weeks, three months tours of duty. In fact, I was down at Fort Knox myself in the fall of 1940 prior to being called to active duty and worked with the ordnance for six weeks, in the tank department there, repairing tanks. But with this old equipment that we were able to get out of the salvage yard, we were able to come up with nearly a complete compliment of tanks, half-tracks, motorcycles, and what trucks we needed. As far as some of the reports that we trained with tin cans and guns – this was rather limited – because we had enough ingenuity to get around this. Yes, we did hold some mock training with broomsticks and tin cans, but this was limited. Normally this was a good method of training new recruits because it's easy to maneuver tin cans and broomsticks than it is to maneuver a tank, not quite as noisy and the training can be picked up a little easier. I think that this part was particularly over-played in some of the propaganda or information that was put out prior to World War II.

But after, at Fort Knox, under the command of Bacon Moore, who was the commander of Company “D” and became the battalion commander, and under the leadership of Theodore Wickert of Maywood, Illinois, who was the second-ranking officer and became battalion executive officer – these two men were very dedicated men – two men that I am sure knew much about the situation of the world and what we were about to get into; and these two men did everything in their power to train every member of the battalion to the ‘nth” degree. Thirty-mile hikes were nothing uncommon in the unit as well as plenty of tank maneuvers and maneuvers with the regular Army on the post. Now, we did have a little problem with the fact that we were the only National Guard unit on the post and the other units were the old regular Army. They

looked down upon us with a little skepticism – I don't blame them the least bit – trying to figure out just what could we do and could we be, were we good enough to be a member of the overall post strength.

But in the summer of 1941, our training had been very complete. In fact, every officer in the unit had qualified in every gun that was on the post. We could fire every piece. In fact, we were all acquainted with 75-millimeter guns; we could fire them properly, those 75-millimeter guns. We could operate every vehicle on the post. This went for most of the men. We had extensive training in 81-millimeter mortar, although the battalion didn't have 81-millimeter mortars and 75-millimeter housers and rifles, we trained with these even though we didn't have any. The activity, of course, was quite heavy and when we left Fort Knox to go on maneuvers – maneuvers at Louisiana in the summer of 1941 – the War Department sent a group of men, officers from the Pentagon or from the War Department down to Fort Knox to be viewers to give an appraisal of the battalion during the Louisiana maneuvers. And at the end of the maneuvers, they read their report which they'd sent to the War Department which stated, in essence, that it was one of the finest units that the Army had ever produced.

Interviewer: Who were those officers that sent – General Patton was one of them, wasn't he?

General George Patton, wasn't he down there?

Gentry: He was there, but I'm not sure whether he was one of the team or not. There were several officers. In fact, I can't remember the one we had at Headquarters Company. I've racked my brain trying to remember what his name was. But this group of men were very pleased with the ability of the battalion, and they said so in their report which they read to us.

At the end of the maneuver, we received a telegram saying to report to Camp Polk, Louisiana, to await further orders. At Camp Polk, we went into a tented area, some distance away from the main post and here we started process of transferring men who did not wish to go to the Philippines with us. At this particular time, we had a code word which covered our destination, which was very simple to figure out – “PLUM” – Philippines, Luzon, Manila. And I think that within thirty minutes after we received the telegram, we had it decoded. Everyone knew where we were going.

Interviewer: That’s something that’s never come out. It’s never come out.

Gentry: You mean the code word? Never knew what the code word was?

Interviewer: It’s never been mentioned. You’re the first one that’s mentioned it.

Gentry: Oh, is that right? Well, anyway, our destination was PLUM, P-L-U-M.

Along with the complete information came other problems of transferring the men who were over age. And under this restriction, we lost Colonel Moore. If there ever was a man that put up a real fight, it was Colonel Moore. In fact, he went to Washington himself after considerable correspondence, corresponding on the phone, on the wire. He went to Washington himself to see what he could do about the situation and they flatly turned him down due to age.

Interviewer: How old was he at this time, Bill?

Gentry: No, I don’t remember.

Interviewer: He must have been in his late fifties then, I suppose; it's been twenty years.

Gentry: Yes, he was in, I would say, his late fifties. But Colonel Wickert is a very able man and an excellent leader then became our battalion commander.

Other changes were made. Lieutenant Horace Cull, for instance, whom you've met, was overage in grade and couldn't go. Davis Gritton also from Harrodsburg was over age in grade and they didn't allow him to go. Claude Gritton, who was a member of Company "D," was overage and couldn't go. There were quite a few, a quite a few of the original group that we lost in this particular category of age. But the battalion strength was filled from transferring men, at that particular time, from other units into the battalion. Up 'til this time, we were able to maintain the letter companies with all men from Kentucky or all men from Ohio or all men from Illinois or all men from Wisconsin. And, actually when we were screening the Selective Service men at Fort Knox, we picked them by state, so that we would have all the men from a state in a company. And in fact, even on the transfer in, I don't think that "D" Company inherited anyone that wasn't from Kentucky. The same held true for the Ohio unit, I know, Of course, Headquarters Company, we had men from every state in the Union in it.

But at Camp Polk, we transferred all our old tanks over to other units and we were given top priority. We drew a full complement of tanks, a full complement of half-tracks, all new guns, all new equipment throughout. This was rather difficult because in order to get new tanks we had to have them pulled away from units all over the U.S. In fact, some of us were out gathering up these tanks and it was kind of heartbreaking to some of the units that we went to as we had the shipping schedules out of Army Ordnance as to where the new tanks were going. Several occasions, the tank was actually sitting in the yard and they were preparing to take it off the flat cars, and we walked up and said, "Very sorry, but do not unload it. The tank belongs to us." And

they said, "What are you talking about? It's our tank." "Well, we're taking it anyway." So we had a full complement of tanks.

Along with the information we received from the War Department, I was given, being the fact that I was battalion communication officer, I was given orders to draw a tremendous amount of communication equipment that didn't normally belong in the battalion. It was not until I arrived in the Philippine Islands that I found out what I was supposed to do with it. And, in fact, some of the equipment arrived by plane at San Francisco just as the time the boat was being loaded. After arriving in the Philippines, I found out that I was supposed to start a communications school in the Philippine Islands to train 10,000 Filipinos in communication. In fact, we had started the barracks and we had started the building for instruction when the war started; we were actually underway and we had some of the buildings up, at the time. And we were going to take the men from the 192nd Tank Battalion as the _____ for training the Filipinos.

When we were entrained at Camp Polk, Louisiana, to head for the West Coast, we took four separate routes, each company traveling by a different route. The letter companies, of course, left out first and Headquarters brought up the rear. We, Headquarters Company, went by a route down through Texas, down through El Paso, through Needles, California, and on up Los Angeles and up the West Coast. One company went north and skirted along the Canadian border and another one a little further down, and Headquarters taking the southern route, going to San Francisco. Of course, the letter companies arrived in San Francisco ahead of Headquarters by a couple or three days. And, of course, they were taken directly to Fort McHenry, over on the island. Well, at Fort McHenry, we were there about two days. No one was allowed to leave the island due to security, the secrecy of our mission. A few of us were able to go over to the dock where the ship was being loaded. I was able to get clearance to go to the bank in order to draw

money out on company funds, cash a check on company funds. But I was only allowed to stay in San Francisco as long as it took to transact this business at the bank and then I had to report back.

We actually traveled all the way to the Philippines in blackout conditions or the war alert. The men, actually, were never told too much about why the blackout conditions, except that this was merely a training operation and we had to do it. The ship we went over on was a dollar liner converted over to a troop transport. The facilities were rather bad, especially the latrine facilities. The quarters were quite crowded. One of the funny incidents that happened; we were standing on the dock waiting to go aboard ship; and as far as the men were concerned, we had been given information as to where we would turn and what steps we would go down and so forth, to take our men to the quarters. And each one of the officers were given a little tag stating the room number that we were to have. And I was down on "D" deck.

Interviewer: Practically the hold of the ship, wasn't it, the keel?

Gentry: Right, it was just above the water line; the porthole was just above the water line. If the sea was rough at all, we had to keep the porthole closed. Several of the fellows came up, one of the fellows came up, and he said, "Boy, look what I've got. I've got the bridal suite." And after about the tenth one came up and informed me he was to be in the bridal suite, I figured this was going to be a little over-crowded. In fact, I think Skip Rue was in that bridal suite.

After we had our men in their quarters, I went back to look for mine. When I found the room, I opened the door, or prior to getting to the room I was to be in, I noticed through the opened doors that there were two or three army cots in each of the rooms. Well, I came to the room I was in, I had to push the door open. So there were no army cots; there were only the two

permanent bunks that were in the state room. So immediately, I closed the door and locked it and waited 'til I heard someone turn the knob. I opened the door and took a look and Lieutenant Holland had been assigned to the same room. And I said, "Is the room you're supposed to be in?" And he said, "Yes." And I said, "Well, get in here real quick and let's shut the door." And he said, "Well, what are you shutting the door for?" And I said, "Did you notice the army cots in all the other rooms as you came down the hallway?" And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "There's none in here. So therefore we don't allow anyone in our room 'til everyone is settled down." So, we stowed our gear away and I said, "there's one thing I want to see. I want to see what this bridal suite looks like." So we started looking for the bridal suite and we found it. We found that the thing was completely covered with cots, and the only way that one could get to the opposite side of the bridal suite was to walk over the other cots in the room. There were that many in there. So I was very thankful that I didn't get the bridal suite.

We had our battalion headquarters set up in the, what do you call it on a ship, the big deck, well it's on the promenade deck, the ballroom or a salon, yeah, a salon right. We had our battalion headquarters set up in there, and also on the boat, we had units, a couple of air corps units and quite a few replacement troops going over. Some of the replacement units were attached to our outfit during the trip across. We had daily training sessions, on board. We had classes for the men. And also, we had 500 men reported every day for chipping paint off of boats and painting boats. In fact, we painted that boat all over by the time we reached the Philippine Islands.

The voyage was twenty-two days, which we were in Honolulu four or five days, unloading some equipment there and reloading some additional stuff in Honolulu. The voyage was very good; we had a little rough weather going over but not much. When we arrived in Manila, instead of the usual greeting which was standard at that time for a new boat coming in

carrying Army troops – the boat would be greeted by a band at the dock and a committee, saying “Welcome to the Philippine Islands. You will enjoy your stay. You will be here for two years. See as much of the Philippine Islands as you can”, etceteras. Instead they came aboard the dock carrying guns, and said, “Draw your firearms immediately; we’re under alert. We expect a war with Japan at any moment. Your destination is Fort Stotsenburg, Clark Field”

Interviewer: Was that Colonel E.V. Miller?

Gentry: Yes, Colonel Miller was in the group that met us.

Interviewer: That was the 194th.

Gentry: The 194th, they went out in the summer, earlier in the summer of ’41. In fact, for that particular unit, we drew all the tanks and equipment for them at Fort Knox and loaded the tanks on the train at Fort Knox and sent them to Colonel Miller on the West Coast.

We immediately took aboard a train and headed for Fort Stotsenburg. And we arrived there and had the troops all settled. Lieutenant Bush and myself took a contingent of men back to Manila, and he and I were in charge of unloading the boat. We unloaded the boat and loaded some of the equipment on the train, little narrow gauge trains and sent it on up to Fort Stotsenburg and the others we readied to drive through in a convoy. We were about two days unloading the boat, and it took us about a day to get out to Fort Stotsenburg. Of course, everything at Camp Polk we had completely covered with _____ for overseas shipment and it all had to be cleaned up. In fact, we had just completed our cleaning of all our guns and loading our equipment with ammunition on December 7th.

Due to the fact that we had picked up from the Selective Service men that we received at Fort Knox a good number of men who were experienced ham radio operators and carried their ham license with them. I provided for them a transmitter, several transmitters and receivers so that they could work the ham radio nets. And one of the things that went up first at Fort Stotsenburg was our communication tent. I would say that within a very few hours after the first radio equipment arrived at Fort Stotsenburg we were in contact with the States, using the ham band. We had our equipment converted so that we could operate on it and we made sure we had the necessary conversion units, even for the new radios we got, to be able to operate. In fact, we were in contact with Dix Dam right on Herrington Lake within a matter of two or three hours after we had our first radio in operation. In fact, I sent a message to my mother.

The night of the attack on Pearl Harbor, we knew of that in a matter of minutes because at that particular time, we had a group of men that were down working the ham nets with their friends back in the States and they were able to pick it up immediately because the ham radio operators in Honolulu, of course, immediately got on the air and started giving out the information. Until security was placed on them we had stacks and stacks of messages that were sent out. So, some two o'clock in the morning, we were all out there. In fact, the main post was alerted due to this communication tent that we had set up there in the middle of our tank park.

Interviewer: Do you recall any of the messages that were coming in from Honolulu at the time?

Gentry: Not offhand; they were the general messages that I think everyone had at that particular time. I don't think they were any different. They were scattered and the first reports were not too accurate, except that we knew there was a tremendous amount going on there. In fact, the commanding general of the post at Fort Stotsenburg was down at the communications tent for a

very short time. And General Weaver was there and Colonel Wickert and Colonel Miller were all there reading the messages which we received.

Interviewer: What was their immediate reaction?

Gentry: Well, the immediate reaction was, "Well, the war has started."

Interviewer: Disbelief, or did they believe it?

Gentry: Oh yes, I don't think there was any doubt in anyone's mind at this particular point.

In fact, this communication set-up had us in a little bit of hot water because the monitoring station at the post in Manila had been tearing their hair out trying to find out where these radios were that had been broadcasting that they had no record of whatsoever. On one trip, with General Weaver, back to the post there in Manila for a meeting with the head of communications for the Philippine Department. He said, "I wish you would help us monitor because we have, somewhere in the Philippines, transmitters set up that are broadcasting almost continuously to the States." And I said, "You don't have to look any further because they're my men." So then, he was relieved and I told him that they were ham radio operators and they were working the ham nets working with friends that they knew back in the States. So he said that he would assign frequencies for us to work on and they would have to notify their friends what frequency to call on.

Of course, the following day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, we were paid a visit by the Japanese at Clark Field. At this particular time, we had our tanks dispersed around the fields

in case of invasion by paratroopers. The only effect that we could have would be small arms fire on the strafing planes coming in. The half-tracks we had held back in the tank park so that we could disperse those at any particular point we might need. In fact, they hit there right at lunch hour. We were just eating at the time the planes appeared. Most of the men that were back in the company area stood there with their mouths open, observing the planes, watching the bomb bays open and watching bombs start to fall. But accompanying the planes were the pursuit planes and they peeled off from the main formation and started circling, headed eastward and circling around Mount A_____. And at this particular point, we decided that they were coming in on this strafing run from the opposite end of the field, so we pulled all the half-tracks out into the golf course, which was at the opposite end of the runway. And we were waiting for them right there. And the first six planes that came down the runway went off in flames smoke, flame and smoke over on the golf course and over the hills around there. And the other pursuit planes followed and immediately saw what was happening, and they pulled up and came in at about three thousand feet and dropped their little incendiary bombs and left. And they never came in on the strafing mission at Clark Field any more.

In fact, the anti-aircraft units that were around Clark Field had the old proximity fuses but their method of cutting fuses was of the old obsolete version and the effect that the field artillery had was rather limited due to the fact that they couldn't cut their fuses and get the elevation they needed to do much damage to the Japs. The pilots, of course, were in their operation center waiting word either to engage the Japanese or merely knew they were coming in, to either engage the Japanese or merely take their planes off and get them out of the vicinity. Of course, they received no word and most of them were caught right in the operation office.

The casualties at Clark Field were terrific. The hospital at Fort Stotsenburg was overrun in the first hour or so. We started then placing cots under mango trees, taking care of them

outside. The dentists were called into duty, to see what they could do helping out on the wards. Every available medical personnel were working on the injured at Clark Field. We lost one man out of the battalion this first encounter there. This man was in a machine gun set up with sand bags around the tank park itself, because we still had a lot of trucks and equipment in there and we had guards posted.

And this particular boy was actually hit in the tank park.

Interviewer: That was Brooks, right?

Gentry: Yes, right. So he was our first casualty in the battalion. Then the next action that we had was, the action until we went north to meet the Japanese at Lingangkuk, was merely standing repeated bombing at Clark Field. They continued to bomb even though the first day took care of all the planes. We didn't have anything left, but they repeatedly bombed Clark Field. We thought that after the first bombing that if the planes did come back they certainly would bring in paratroopers because there wasn't anything left. The, we, of course, moved north when the Japanese started the invasion, with the three letter companies remaining in the battalion taking up position at Lingangkuk. Of course, as soon as we arrived in the Philippines, Company "D" was transferred to the 194th Tank Battalion. Skip Rue, who was then commanding Company "D," was transferred to General Weaver's headquarters and a captain from Texas, by the name of Altman, became company commander of "D" Company. And the officers that were with "D" Company prior to being transferred to 194th were transferred within 194th to other companies of the 194th. And "D" Company had a full new complement of officers at that time.

Of course, the 194th went south to take up the position in the south and the invasion from the south of Luzon. And the 192nd went north to take care of the invasion up there. Of course, our

training had all been offensive training. I can't remember any particular phase of our training at Fort Knox that we ever had defensive action; it was always offensive. The tanks were always considered offensive weapons. And we immediately found ourselves in the position of having to reverse and fight rear-guard action all the way back in the Bataan peninsula. The three companies of 192nd, of course, fanned out: "A" Company taking the western sector; "D" Company taking the central sector; and "C" Company taking the eastern sector, on the withdrawal. In the fight at Roserio was the particular time I was sent from Headquarters Company by Colonel Wickert to join "C" Company and help Collins out. _____, the company commander, had returned to the rear and Collins was in command with two officers with very little experience.

We were in support of the 26th Cavalry from Roserio back to a place called Emigan. We fought rear-guard action for them. We had numerous clashes with the Japanese. The 26th Cavalry were excellent soldiers, being Filipino scouts, being well-trained, quite good fighters. Quite often we had a few mix-ups in trying to understand the Filipinos. The main effort that we could put forth for them was in the elimination of machine gun nests or artillery emplacements. As they pointed them out, we would go in and eliminate them, and hold, as they were crossing river or bridges, and then blow the bridges behind us. The area of San Quentin, we spread out on a wide front, sometimes as much as twenty-five miles with a single company, with no support to speak of, because they had all pulled back to a third position. And we were trying to hold 'til our third position could be established. Then pulled back to San Jose; had limited action down to Bongabong and Kabu. Encountered the Japanese at Bongabong and then, at Kabu, we blew the bridge and waited for the Japanese to move in.

At this particular time, they felt that they needed to gain information as to how the Japanese made their attacks. We camouflaged one platoon of "C" Company, 192nd, just south of

the river at Kabu and waited for the Japanese to cross. Our troops were then ten or twelve miles further south and the only thing we had in the vicinity was tanks. The fact that we had them very well camouflaged under houses and covered up with brush and in clumps of trees, the only thing we had to do was talk, shout, to make the Japanese think they had troops in front of them. And they made their attack when they crossed the river. They made their river crossing and we could hear them; we could hear tanks operating on the opposite side of the river. The infantry came first, and we sat through about three hours of infantry streaming by before they ever discovered that we were in there. In fact, I sat on the front of the tank and described their complete action by radio back to headquarters, where they were, at this particular time, getting a complete account of it.

They discovered us by a Japanese trying to walk through the brush pile I had standing around my tank. At this point, we were discovered and the only thing left was to sound the siren and attack. We had a skirmish in the field, a field just south of the river at Kabu for quite some time and we withdrew back to the town of Cabanatuan. And the only road back was through Cabanatuan, and when we arrived at Cabanatuan, we found all types of Japanese equipment at Cabanatuan. We still had ammunition left but had to withdraw south to join up with the rest of the forces. But, in coming into Cabanatuan, we found artillery, plenty of other equipment and we stayed in the town for two hours doing everything we could to chop up the Japanese unit and to halt them before they proceeded south. We pulled back then to the town of Japan, picked up more ammunition, gasoline, pulled back into the vicinity of Baliwog. At Baliwog, we found ourselves confronted by a bridge that had not been blown by the engineers, a narrow-gauge railroad bridge. And we waited at Baliwog for the Japanese to advance south. At this particular point, we were given the orders to hold at all costs, as the troops from the south had to clear the _____ before we could withdraw, because it was the only route to Bataan.

We reached Baliwog the day before and had time to make a complete reconnaissance before the Japanese moved in on us. The morning of December 31st, we made a reconnaissance run north toward, north on a route on which we had retreated on, and encountered several Japanese patrols, so we knew that they were well on us. We knew that the bridge would be the only possible place that they would be able to cross, so we set up our defenses in view of the railroad bridge which was in a large rice paddy at the edge of the town of Baliwog. Early on the morning of the 31st, the Japanese started moving infantry across this railroad bridge. Shortly after, the engineers came in and put down planking down on the bridge to carry the tank and started carrying tanks across the bridge some time before noon on the morning of the 31st.

By late afternoon, they assembled a good number of tanks in the field at the end of the bridge. They had the lookouts in the church steeple in the town. We had one platoon under the command of Marshall Kennedy to the southwest of the bridge; I had my platoon to the west of the bridge. Collins was south on the road leading out of Baliwog with the remainder of the tanks. Early that morning, we had sent Lieutenant Preston south after we had observed the Japanese trying to move across the bridge; we had him go south to find a bridge that he could cross, to find some way that he could get back up on the opposite side of the river to surprise the Japanese. He left early that morning and became lost some way that day and never made it back. In fact, we had to look him up the following day to find out where he was. But he was still trying to find a crossing in the river when we found him.

Late in the afternoon, Major Morley came riding into Baliwog in a jeep. At this point, during the day, we had maintained radio silence so that we would not give our position away. We had all remained within the houses, under which we had our tanks parked. We had zeroed all our guns in on the collection of Jap tanks in the field some fifteen yards in front of us. When Morley came in, the lookout in the church steeple became very excited. Morley came directly to

the house, came inside, and I informed him that we were sitting there looking at a collection of Jap tanks out in the field and, also, that the Jap lookout in the church steeple was quite excited as to why he was there. And that the only thing for him to do was to get in his jeep and drive out of town just as though nothing happened. And we would hold until we thought he was clear of the town and then we would attack because the Japanese in the steeple were bound to investigate what was going on in this house. We waited until we felt that he had had sufficient time to clear. Then we opened fire on them from the houses.

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Our first round of fire was concentrated on the collection of Japanese tanks at the end of the bridge out in the open field. We immediately pulled out from our position under the house and signaled Kennedy that we were going to drive the Japanese tanks in his direction. He held his position until tanks came within view of his platoon and, at this particular point, he entered the fight, too. Our first burst of fire, the Japanese immediately scattered out over the field and headed for the town. Also, some of them went in the direction of Kennedy's platoon which was southeast of the town. We were chasing the tanks up and down the streets of the town, under buildings, through buildings. We were able to definitely establish that we had eight tanks out of action when we were ordered to withdraw. We had dealt considerable damage to the infantry unit, in fact put them in route over the bridge whence they came, left the town burning. The burning houses, of course, helped us in chasing the Jap tanks in the dark.

The battalion headquarters, of course, was tuned in on our radio frequency and was apparently having a picnic listening to the fight. Occasionally, they would come in and give us

words of encouragement, like cheering on a football team. The only casualty from the encounter was a sprained ankle when one of the boys attempted to get off the tank in a hurry to tell his part of the story after the fight was over and we had withdrawn to a safe area. We were completely out of ammunition; we had completely out-maneuvered, out-fought the Japanese tanks. The tanks we had were, of course, very fast, very maneuverable, and the 37-millimeter guns really packed a wallop. We only had armor-piercing ammunition with us, the only ammunition available for the new 37-millimeter guns in the Philippine operation. There were plenty of high-explosive ammunition available for the old type 37-millimeter guns. And later on, we had the ordnance to take a projectile from the old 37-millimeter ammunition, reduce the amount of powder in the shell, and reinsert the high-explosive projectile in the new type case and recrimp it. And we used these in the latter operations in Bataan.

We pulled out of Balliwog on orders of General Weaver, told to pull back to the _____ bridge and hold until all the troops had cleared from the south. When we reached Culumpit Bridge, we found that the bridge had been dynamited by the retreating forces, but we were still able to go across the bridge. Just north of the Culumpit Bridge, this area is all open rice paddies. The rice had been harvested in the area and was in large stacks around at different places. Since we felt the attack would probably come at night, we moved into position we zeroed our guns in on these rice stacks so that the first round of ammunition from the 37-millimeter gun would be tracer ammunition that would go through a rice stack. This would give us a light to light up the area so that we could see the Japanese.

We spaced our tanks about a hundred yards apart or more and, since we were the only troops in the area, we kept up a constant chatter of shouting between tanks in order to make the Japanese know that there were troops up in front and to hold up their advance. They moved equipment across the bridge and troops from dusk until about midnight. At this particular point,

they had advanced up within just a few yards of us. In fact, some houses directly in front of us, the Japanese had collected in back of these houses until we felt there just wasn't room for anymore. We could see them setting up their mortar positions out a little ways and the first volley was mortar fire which they dropped right over in amongst our tanks and we had four men that picked up a few pieces of shrapnel in this first volley from the mortar. At this particular point, we opened fire by setting the rice stacks afire and gave them small arm machine-gunning.

Then later on, as we leveled off the troops out in front of us, we started using the 37's on equipment we could see further out. And in fact, we were down to the point where we were shooting a single Japanese with a single round of 37-millimeter ammunition. At about two o'clock in morning, we were completely out of ammunition, even though we had started with more than our normal load of ammunition. And we pulled back, under orders, to San Fernando, where we refueled and filled up with ammunition. At this point, we were told to proceed to Porack, as there were troops clearing through San Fernando and the Japanese were pushing in the Porack area and were about to cut us off at San Fernando. We went over in the vicinity of Porack and there the Philippine Army was having considerable trouble with artillery fire. We were soon able to find out the exact position of an artillery battalion from a Filipino lieutenant who was returning with a straggling platoon. After getting his location, we immediately pulled out and to see what we could do with it.

When we arrived at the gun positions, we were able to get three of the guns; but the Japanese immediately pulled out and dispersed. We chased them over the area, putting out of action trucks and taking care of as much infantry in the area that we could. After this encounter, we were ordered to withdraw to the ____rmosa Bridge. We held up at the ____rmosa Bridge until the last troops cleared through, and Major Morley, at this point, told us it was time for us to back up over the bridge. The Japanese were within our small-arms fire of the bridge at this

particular point. And we crossed over the bridge and blew the bridge. This halted the Japanese advance until a few days later when the _____ attacked the first line.

The first line of defense included the area on each side of the mountain range, but it did not include a line of defense over the mountains. And the Japanese, as they are unpredictable, they made their penetration by coming over the mountains and had made a penetration far enough that we were not able to restore the line due to the terrain. We had to withdraw from this line to our second position. The second position held for several days before we were forced, by their penetration, to withdraw and form a third and final line. The third line was well defended from one side of Bataan to the other. By this time, the troops were well coordinated and this line held for quite some time and possibly, would have held a great deal longer due to the fact of the shortage of rations. We ate the horses of the 26th Cavalry and then the mules of the 26th Cavalry and we thrashed the rice stacks that were in the area to get the rice. We were down to the point where we were only getting about eight hundred calories a day and, normally, one meal, at the time of surrender.

The real penetration came in the area where we had the biggest losses from malaria. In fact, many thousands of Filipinos were taken with malaria and weren't able to hold their rifles up. Quinine gave out soon after we arrived in Bataan. The gasoline had dwindled to a place where all the gasoline was reserved for the tanks. We were actually in the sector, that I was in, carrying 105 ammunition on bamboo poles to gun positions. One thing that we did have in Bataan – we had a wonderful supply of ammunition. And with the addition of food, quinine and gasoline, we probably would have been able to hold a great deal longer.

The 11th Division of the Philippine Army was in the sector of the Tual River. The Japanese made a penetration up the Tual River. Company "C" 192nd was sent in support of the 11th Division of the Philippine Army. We helped seal the pocket off and we had trapped, in this

pocket, about ten or eleven thousand Japanese. It took us approximately a week or a week and a half to clean out the Japanese in this particular pocket. At the time we were cleaning out the Tual pocket, the Japanese had landed a division of crack Jap marines on the Agaloma River or in the vicinity of it. They had pushed inward and cut off our only road on the west side of Bataan. We were not able to get supplies forward or make any movement of troops in that particular area for this was our one and only road. The area was fortified with an Air Force unit which were converted into infantry since we no longer had planes to fly. They were very much inexperienced.

Lieutenant John Hay of Company "C" 192nd Tank Battalion was sent in support of this converted Air Force unit. Immediately after arriving, John was confronted by the unit commander as to what they could do, as they were not infantry people, how would they handle the situation. Lieutenant Hay gave them information as to how they should handle the situation and developed a new technique, at this particular point, of putting six men behind each tank with a musket bag filled with hand grenades. As he would move through the jungle with the tanks, he would force the Japanese into their foxholes and, as they passed over the foxholes, the men walking behind would leave each one a present of a hand grenade. And they forced the Japanese right back to the sea with this particular maneuver. Hay could take care of the machine guns. He could take care of the anti-tank guns. He could take care of the artillery they had, but he couldn't get the Japanese out of the foxholes. The campaign was very successful, and it took him about a week to eliminate this Japanese penetration on the West Coast of Bataan. He was decorated twice with the Silver Star for his gallantry and being able to eliminate the units.

We were also, the other units of the company, were called into the Agaloma River area. After, at the end of this mop-up operation, at this point we had our first tank loss in Company "C." The Japanese had mined the trails in the area and we lost one tank to a tank mine. Before we could get the tank out, push the Japanese back, and get the tank and drag it out of the jungle,

the Japanese had killed the men in the tank and had filled the tank full of dirt, which made it very difficult to drag it out of there. In fact, after the first few hours of combat, we knew that the men in the tank were no longer alive and it took us about three days afterward to actually get the tank out of there. We moved back at the break-through, "C" Company 194th was cut off. We crossed over the river in the central part of Bataan, found "C" Company 194th and led them back across into the western sector. At this point, we were given orders to destroy our equipment and surrender to the Japanese.

This we did and surrendered on April 11th to the Japanese on the west side of Bataan. They immediately told us to go to Marvales where we did, and we were pushed out on the beach and kept there for two or three days and started the Death March to Camp O'Donnell. The men were grouped in groups of a hundred, a hundred fifty men and, with the complement of Japanese guards, started the march. The group I was with required eleven days to get to Camp O'Donnell, which could actually be accomplished on foot in a much shorter time, except the Japanese gave us the treatment of taking us out in the fields and having us sit in the sun, without our hats, crowded. Most of the movement was at night and the sitting in the fields in the daytime was the treatment they preferred to give us.

In the eleven days, I only had seven canteens of water. And I think this would be pretty much average for the group I was with. We were given one ball of rice about the size of a baseball and this consisted of the food for eleven days. I had a very severe case of malaria while I was on the Death March, and three or four days of it I don't even remember. The fellows in the unit took turns carrying me along the road. In fact, one lieutenant in the 192nd Tank Battalion carried for the better portion of the way. And I was able to reward him by carrying him the last few miles into the prison camp at Camp O'Donnell.

At Camp O'Donnell, our major problem was water. We'd have to stand in water all day, sometimes two days, in order to get a canteen of water. The sanitation facilities were nil and immediately, disease started in. Our death rate started soaring almost immediately upon arrival at the prison camp. They moved us to Camp Cabanatuan shortly thereafter. Here again, our sanitation facilities were such that dysentery and malaria and broken heart took over. Our death rate at one time reached the rate of five hundred men a day. You would carry out the dead in the morning and that afternoon, the next morning, the fellows that had the men the previous morning would be carried out to be buried. Of course, this death rate couldn't last very long. It would soon take us all.

The Japanese moved us out in small units of work details and this helped the situation a great deal. Although a great number of men did stay at Camp Cabanatuan, many of us were able to get out to smaller groups. I was taken in a group down to the island of Mendenal, in a group of six hundred, where we were placed on an experimental farm of the Philippine Department of Agriculture. At this point, we joined with the ones that were captured in the southern forces of the Philippines. This brought our strength up to 2,200 in the prison camp out Mendenal. The stay at Mendenal lasted 18 months. The main object the Japanese had there was to produce food for the Japanese army, to produce lumber, to produce hemp, coffee. We had a large coffee plantation. We had plenty of timber. In fact, the acreage was 66,000 _____; I believe a _____ is about a 1000 acres, isn't it? But, the rice area, or the area in which we raised rice, contained about 1600 acres. And we had under cultivation, we planted rice every day; we cultivated rice every day; we thrashed rice every day. We had this entire area of about 1600 acres in rice. Our sole purpose was to sabotage this rice any way we could.

First, as we harvested the rice, we would drop the heads of the rice in the mud and tramp on it. We'd get as little in the baskets as we could. Then, when we'd take it to the thrasher, we

made sure the thrasher blew as much out in the chaff stack as possible. When it was taken to the warehouse for the drying process, we would just forget to push it in when it rained and it would get musty and moldy. We lost as much of it there as possible. A great detail of it would get as far as the rice polisher, the rice mills, to take the husks off and polish the rice. Here, we would stack the rice in large piles as much as twenty or thirty feet high. And when they'd get pile up next to the roof and the Japanese guard wasn't looking, they'd proceed to poke a hole in the roof so that it would leak in the middle of the pile. It would only take a few days and they'd bring the trucks and move out the rice, they'd come to find that the entire stack was rotten even though the stacks looked good on the outside. In the eighteen months we were down there, they were only able to take a truck or a truckload and a half of rice out of the place. So we were very successful in that.

Then the hemp plantation, we had to operate this. We made the hemp right from the banana tree. We had a detail to make rope. Most of these men were Navy men and they knew how to make rope. Most of these men were Navy men and they knew how to make rope. And they would make the prettiest rope you ever saw and you could take a rope two inches in diameter and put six men on each end of it and pull it in two. They built flaws in. We were so determined not to help the Japanese cause, even if we had to starve to death. We almost did starve ourselves to death as well as the Japanese garrison.

The health conditions on Mendenal were very good. We were able to get medications through the Red Cross which helped take care of the malaria, take care of the dysentery and so forth. The broken heart was the big killer at the very outset. In fact, a good number of the medical reports that the doctors kept, it was listed that the man died of a broken heart, of no particular disease.

As the war began to turn, and the Japanese were losing in the South, they decided to move us back north. They loaded us on boats and took us back to Luzon and back to Camp

Cabanatuan. We'd only been there a very short time when they started making movement north to Japan, taking all the able-bodied out. Shortly after I reached Cabanatuan, I had dysentery for the first time and was, of course, confined in the isolation area in the camp. As far as the Japanese were concerned, you'd just as well have leprosy as dysentery, and actually wouldn't come near the area. That was one area in the camp that they wouldn't personally count the number of men in. They'd just come to the fence and say, "How many men do you have?" And you'd say, "I've got a hundred." And they'd say, "Well, thank you," and walk off. So the able-bodied were taken to Japan, and there were over six hundred of us left in Camp Cabanatuan when the invasion came on Luzon and the group was liberated by the ranger battalion. That about sums up the campaign, except a major portion of the fellows that were liberated at the time I was chose to remain in the theater. In fact, there were so many of us that chose to remain over there that they decided to send us all home. So we all came back.

Out of the group that returned, all of them I've come in contact with, I usually make the one point of trying to see how they feel. There is a lot of bitterness and remorse on the part of many of them. Of course, many of them are badly disabled. I was very lucky to come out in good physical condition. I know the Japanese did what they were told to do. Many times, I had the occasion to have a single Japanese guard off by himself and come to find out that he's very much human. It's only when you put two of them together that they became little Tojos. I think that encounter that we had with the prison camp would be well for most people to now from the point of survival. What do men do, because in my Army training, the one thing that never came about or no one ever spoke of, how are you to survive if you et into certain conditions. This is something the Army had started, of course, survival courses. At this particular time, I would like to see survival courses for the general public because it's quite an art to learn to live out of a tin can. I don't know if there's anything else you want to inject or find out about.