

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
Ernest O. Norquist, 1919-2004
Medic, Army, World War II
1995

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Norquist, Ernest O. (1919-2004). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy : 2 sound cassettes (ca. 105 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy : 2 sound cassettes (ca. 105 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript : 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers : 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract

Ernest Norquist, born in Saint Paul, Minnesota, discusses his experiences as a World War II medic with Army General Hospital No. 2, a Bataan Death March survivor, and a prisoner of war. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1941 with a Bachelors degree in history and enlisted in the Army. He recounts his experiences growing up during the Depression, his religious background and his army career as a medic with General Hospital #2. The Depression also inspired Norquist to become a minister after the war because of the compassion and help his family received from their pastors. Norquist reveals his affinity for history and tells that he collected propaganda from Germany, France and other countries for historical value. Norquist kept a diary during his time in the service. He was sent to Fort Snelling (Minnesota) for training and explains that he did not receive much training because the army just wanted bodies overseas and figured they would train them once deployed. He also explains that he was put in charge of 8 other men because he had a bit of ROTC training, he had no weapons training other than with a World War I rifle. Norquist remembers arriving at Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay (California) and expresses disdain of the crude army culture of swearing and discipline, although he always obeyed. He recounts that he was first assigned to Hospital #2, Fort McKinley, just outside Manila (Philippines), where he changed bedpans, gave baths, took temperatures and reported to nurses. Norquist explains his interest in seeing the country and talks about visiting Guadeloupe, the Pasig River, watching trains, visiting Luneta Park in Manila to attend concerts, and playing trumpet with a radio station band. He describes attending the United Church of Manila, the parishioners, and falling in love with the church organist. Norquist recalls the night before he heard about Pearl Harbor that he was at Tagaytay Ridge outside Manila dancing at a party with local girls, he remembers being called to the parade ground the next morning and being told about Pearl Harbor and that they were next and should expect an attack within twenty hours. Norquist explains that they engaged in a gas mask drill and were told that if the Japanese invaded it would be confined to the coastal area and the war would not last very long. Norquist describes receiving injured servicemen coming from Clark Air Field, including a Japanese aviator who he felt pity for. He describes seeing amputations and other injuries. Norquist reveals that he was sent to a new hospital in Manila, where bombs were falling and there were rumors of tanks getting closer. He relates that he did not feel prepared for war and everyone except the veterans were frightened. Norquist reports that on December 29th he was taken to Corregidor. He explains he was first assigned to a hospital then sent to areas around Corregidor that were beginning to receive the impact of bombings. Norquist reiterates his

hatred for the planes and war in general and the pity he felt for those who were hit. He was then sent to Bataan, where they set up a hospital in the jungle to triage. Norquist treated Americans and Filipinos. He states that as time went on they hoped for rescue and heard that planes and ships were coming to help as they began to run out of supplies. Running low on food inspired some creative eating, including monkeys and snakes. Norquist states that he was able to see Japanese prisoners at Hospital No. 1, in Bataan, and they were treated very well. He talks about the line pushing closer and being able to hear the artillery all day, and Japanese with specially cut tennis shoes (for climbing) shooting from trees. Norquist relates that he had to search for a downed American pilot. Norquist talks about the order to surrender and portrays the feelings surrounding the flag of surrender going up. He explains he kept a hidden diary and that he was allowed to keep his trumpet, but that his native flute was taken away. Norquist recounts that he was taken to Mariveles, then marched past Cabcaben, Lamau, Lamay, and San Fernando. He recalls being sent to Bilibid prison in Manila and while in route, seeing corpses of American soldiers on the side of the road. They marched past Cabanatuan prison and into the town where there was a horrible smell. He states that some prisoners started going crazy yelling and screaming and one man, who later died in prison camp was yelling "There is no war!" Norquist expresses the camaraderie and care they felt for each other. He discusses caring for the wounded and sick in prison camp and states that many of the early deaths occurred because the Japanese were not prepared for so many prisoners. Many men were sick with dysentery and malaria. Norquist comments on Red Cross supplies arriving in 1942 and how that increased morale and helped them get healthier. He explains that chaplains and others organized interest groups and taught lessons such as literature, language, craft making and algebra. Norquist goes into detail about being beaten and the Japanese guards being beaten by superiors if they stepped over the line. He recounts other forms of abuse and death. Norquist analyzes the treatment of Japanese-Americans in the United States during and after the war. He reveals rumors, some true, that circulated around the camp about how the war was going. He remembers dreaming and talking about food all the time because they were being fed primarily just rice. Norquist discusses how they smuggled food and other items back into the camp after they were on work detail. He was later taken to Tokyo and the food and sanitation conditions were better there, but there were bombings nearby from American planes and shrapnel would fly through the camp. Norquist describes the living quarters and hiding his diary and trumpet in a chapel and discusses how he put together the diary. He explains that in addition to physical health, mental attitude, prayer and religion played a part in how healthy a prisoner would stay. He illustrates a few amusing stories from the prison camp. He recounts the day he was freed, going into the village and being fed. On September 23rd, 1945 he was brought aboard a hospital ship. Norquist examines people's reaction to the atomic bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the bombs available today. He discusses his adjustment back to the United States, still dreaming of prison camp experiences. He attended seminary at Princeton and spent one year studying in Sweden. Norquist belongs to the American Legion, the VFW and two prisoner of war organizations. He wrote a book, *Our paradise: a GI's war diary*.

Biographical Sketch

Ernest O. Norquist (1919-2004) was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He trained at Fort Snelling (Minnesota) and served as a medic with the Army during World War II. Norquist was a prisoner of war and was forced to march in the Bataan Death March. After the war he became a minister. He is the father of John Norquist, former mayor of the City of Milwaukee.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995.
Transcription edited by Christina M. Ballard, 2008.

Interview:

Mark: Okay. Today's date is June 30, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Ernest Norquist of Milwaukee, a veteran of the Pacific Theater in World War II. Good morning Mr. Norquist.

Norquist: Good morning.

Mark: Thanks for driving in on a summer Friday, the construction season. I appreciate it very much.

Norquist: It was a good morning to drive anyway.

Mark: It looks beautiful out there.

Norquist: It wasn't too hot.

Mark: Let's start from the top, I guess. Perhaps you could tell me a little about where you were born and raised and what you were doing prior to your entry into the service.

Norquist: I was born and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota. I was one of four boys. I was the oldest. And I came of Scandinavian heritage.

Mark: Swedish to be precise, right?

Norquist: Right. That's right. And went through grade school, junior high and high school. My wife was in the same junior high and the same high school as I was by the way, although we didn't fall in love in those days. Went to the University of Minnesota, graduated BA, major in history in 1941. I had worked on the railroad summers to get through the university; the dining cars on a fast train. So that brings us up to the time that I was facing the draft and I decided to enlist in order to be able to get a good trip out of the Army—the farthest places I can go. They said, “Well, we can send you to Hawaii or to the Philippine islands.” And I said, “What kind of jobs are available?” And they said, “Well, quartermaster we need, medics,” and he was about to go on to other categories and I said, “I'll take medics.”

Mark: Uhm, to back track a little bit, these were the Depression years.

Norquist: Oh, yeah.

Mark: Did you have trouble financing your education? You mentioned, for example, that you worked for the railroad. Was it a problem for you and your family?

Norquist: No because actually it was so cheap to go, prices were so cheap for going to school in those days. I would go for a whole year for \$60 in tuition. I lived at home. There was an \$8.50 fee by the way beside that got you just about into anything. So \$68.50 pretty well did it. I ate at the YMCA with a friend of mine usually. The "Y" was very cheap. On the railroad, although my beginning work was \$.25 an hour, \$.30 an hour, but in those days an ice cream cone was a nickel, hamburger might be \$.10, \$.06 to travel the streetcar anywhere you wanted. Trolley is used in this part of the country. We called them streetcars. So, I got by handsomely. Even had enough money to go on dates a little bit. The Depression had prepared us for this kind of thing anyway because we, our family lived very simply during the Depression years and that became a way of life.

Mark: What did your father do for a living?

Norquist: Well, he had been a banker and getting very good money. Lived in what would be type of suburban existence, near a lake at first. And then when the Depression hit he lost his work and we lost the very home that we lived in and had to go live in a very humble circumstances. But it wasn't all bad. There were good people in that community and we learned to do without. To this day, my wife and I live very simply and were able to put aside a little bit. We can help the grand kids in going through college and so forth just because we are that way. And it was a good preparation for prison camp life.

Mark: If anything can prepare you, I suppose.

Norquist: Yeah. Even that was, I feel, a good experience in the aggregate. Learned to sympathize with people who are at the bottom end of things a great deal and I've helped many refugees that have come from other countries.

Mark: Like after the Vietnam War for example?

Norquist: Some. Yeah, oh sure. In fact, in that period we welcomed some Laotians and some Vietnamese. It was a good experience.

Mark: I'll come back to that 'cause I'm interested in that actually.

Norquist: Great.

Mark: I'm interested in life on campus at Minnesota before the war. I, of course, as you can tell by looking at me, I grew up after the Vietnam War. And so the most recent history for me is when there's a war coming there's a lot of disgruntlement, the guys don't want to go. World War II seems to have been much different and I'm wondering what the atmosphere was like on campus among a lot of draft-age young men.

Norquist: Well, I was not aware of any protest at all. It was just something that you did if your country called upon you. There were no great heroics about it or anything. It was just a matter of common assent.

Mark: There were groups like America First and these kinds of things.

Norquist: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's true. Some of them were ethnic based. Some were people of German heritage who had along the line acquired the notion that a strong Germany was a good thing even though Hitler—they weren't aware of the excesses that Hitler was perpetrating or of the ones that he would perpetrate. I don't think that it ever came up in our conversation. We were utterly unaware at that time of his treatment of the Jewish people. We were not aware of, at the time of the Depression he was just getting into these things. 1935 and 6 is when he began to really get going on it.

Mark: Right.

Norquist: Whereas, before that why, we didn't know about these things.

Mark: So, as war looms in the late 30's and early 40's there's apparently not much discussion of it.

Norquist: No, I was curious about the different countries and being of an historical mind, and so I would read up on Germany, read up on France, read up on various countries, and I remember even writing to the various embassies and getting their propaganda. I got some from Germany, I got some from Britain. When I came home some of it was still there, the German, and I gave it to the Goethe House. They might have thrown it away but I thought it was historically important. Not that I was affected by it. I'm the kind of person anyway who can see about seven sides to almost any question. People that are focused on just one issue sometimes bother me a little bit. Where they think that the whole world revolves about that and there's no other side to the story. So I was able to be fairly dispassionate although at times I felt hatred and so forth, or pressures. But I was able to be more dispassionate than some people. A little bit of that feeling gets in the book if you recall.

Mark: Yeah. Interestingly enough it does. I've just got one more issue I want to throw out before --

Norquist: We were very patriotic, though. There's no question about that.

Mark: That if called you would go. And everyone felt that.

Norquist: Yeah.

- Mark: I've got just one more thing I want to ask before we get into the military experience. To jump ahead to the end of the story a little bit, you eventually became a minister and I'm wondering if before you went into the service that these sort of, did you lean towards that vocation in the first place? As a 21-year-old kid perhaps you didn't think about that. Perhaps you did. I don't know.
- Norquist: Oh, yeah. Partly it was a subconscious thing because we as a family had had such a wonderful experience with church and with the kind of pastors that we had during the Depression. The pastor that we had at that time would come around to our house though we were quite a distance from where we had lived and would console our folks, help them with their problems and so forth. The fellow that followed him was the same way. And so we had a good experience and I had seen how they had held people together in the Depression and how they helped them to take hope and so forth. So this was all in my background. Even the preaching was good. People are not always that lucky with the pastors that they get today. Now a-days some of them will focus on one issue and that issue comes up in every sermon. People in those days tried to deal with the whole gamut of life. I think they believed very implicitly that religion had to do with all of life and all that life had to do with religion. It wasn't a narrow focus.
- Mark: And you started out Lutheran? Is that correct? We discussed this before.
- Norquist: Well, when I was a baby, yeah. When I was just a little boy. Yeah, until I was about five years old we went to First Lutheran Church in St. Paul. It's an old historic church where my great-grandparents went, and my grandparents, and most of my relatives. And our folks moved and they went to church which came out of the Lutheran church called the Evangelical Covenant Church. Just a tad more pietistic but basically quite Lutheran. Great emphasis on confirmation in the church and the sacraments and so forth. It was a good church. A big church, too, by the way. The pastor was very supportive to me. As I was going to go away he gave me a little folder with a picture of the church in it and a few scripture verses inserted in it. I carried it through the whole thing. I still have it. So I had all that background. Love of the church. My wife and I both, social life revolved around the church. It shaped our lives and kept us from certain amount of things that might have gone wrong, I guess, otherwise. It was in my background. I also looked forward, possibly, to teaching. I felt I'd like to be a teacher.
- Mark: Of history?
- Norquist: Yeah, yeah, right.
- Mark: So, you are finishing up college and you get a letter in the mail that says "Greetings" from the selective service. I'm interested in your reaction to that,

and your thoughts, and perhaps some of your friends and acquaintances, did they get the same greeting about the same time?

Norquist: Oh, the answer is “yes” on both counts. I don’t know the whole story about the others. I was gone before—see, this was early on. I was gone before a lot of the others faced their moment of truth. But to me it was just something that, well, I took a philosophic view of it—what has to be, has to be. I remember saying good-bye to my folks and thinking to myself in two years I’ll be back. Nobody would dare to attack the United States of America, of course. So, off I went and I just decided to take whatever I had to take and try to come back in one piece.

Mark: If you would, describe your sort of entry into the military. Where did you report to? Where’d you get your physical? And going to basic training, and getting the haircut and the whole thing. Just sort of a narrative of your entry into the service.

Norquist: I went over to Fort Snelling and there I got the physical and there I was put up in the barracks with people I’d never met before. We began to have a bit of a camaraderie right away. They took us out and marched us a great deal. That’s about all they did, as a matter of fact. And we did have lectures by a master sergeant and I can still remember his saying that “When you are in the service, be honest. If you ain’t got integrity, you ain’t got nothing.” And I remember his also saying that “Now, there’s two kinds--” he was giving us an overall view of what the military was like, the branches of the service, and so forth, and terms you used in the military, and he happened to say, “Now, there’s two kinds of cavalry. There is the mechanized—horse-drawn cavalry and the mechanized cavalry.” That was an interesting bit of information. A bit religious, in fact.

Mark: The cavalry. So, this was your actual basic training right where you grew up. You didn’t go off to Texas or anything like that?

Norquist: Oh, no. They wanted bodies over there and they thought we’ll train then, we’ll have plenty of time to train them over there. They wanted to get numbers. So I was not even offered that opportunity, you might say. So the day came that I went down to the railroad station—oh, they had put me in charge of eight others, about half of whom were American Indian, because I’d had a little ROTC. That’s the only reason. And, presumably, I would know something because of that. Actually, I had only been drilled there, too [laughs]. So, off I went on the Olympian train. It was a marvelous train. We were in what was called the “tourist” Pullman cars. Coaches, you know, they are where you sit up all the time and the “tourist” Pullman bunks are not good for tall people but they’re bunks anyway, you know. You can scrunch up in an “s” curve and be fairly comfortable. Normally, tourist Pullman people can’t go back to the observation car with its luxury, with its radio, with its

magazines, with its barber shop, all that on a crack train. You had all those things. Even manicuring. And so we were in the tourist—but the conductor who is the “god” on the train—I mean he’s higher than the engineer, you know—the conductor allowed us to go back to the observation car and I got to know the others pretty well. A fellow named Al Marsh that was going to get off at Hawaii, and several others were to go there, too. I don’t know where the others went. But we got as far as Portland, Oregon and we were out for just a fairly short time but a couple of fellows managed to get drunk in that short time. We all got on the train in time. But one of them, in his inebriated state, pulled the goatee of the conductor on the train so from that time on, going down the coast towards San Francisco, we were in the dog house and they wouldn’t give us much in the way of service. We got off there and reported in and that’s the last I saw of my friends. I went to Angel Island. It’s a hopping-off place for --

Mark: In San Francisco Bay.

Norquist: Yeah.

Mark: And that’s where you left for the Philippines from?

Norquist: Yeah.

Mark: Going back a little bit to your training, did you have any sort of problem adjusting to military life? For example, four-letter words, discipline --

Norquist: Oh, I’d run into that in spades in the Army so I was inured to that. It didn’t bother me in the least. I didn’t like it, you know. I never got in the habit. I could do it if I wanted to. I think the railroad experience helped prepare me for all this.

Mark: I see.

Norquist: Yeah. The guys on the railroad could be pretty rough.

Mark: [unintelligible], shall we say?

Norquist: Yeah, right. And they had a heart of gold. I mean they had great camaraderie among themselves and I just felt it would be a little like that.

Mark: And what about the discipline. You know, “yes, sir,” “no, sir.” “Where you going?”

Norquist: Well, I never liked it. I never liked it. At that time I didn’t do anything that would make them aware of my feelings though. When I was in prison camp at times I did. But not at that time or even my time of service in the

Philippines before I was captured. I always obeyed what I was told to do and I always tried to do as best I could, whatever I was assigned to do.

Mark: And one last thing—the equipment that you used to train. I don't know if you had, you must have had some weapons training, even as a medic.

Norquist: Actually, no I didn't. But I had gone through being able to load a rifle, a World War I rifle, when I was in the National, no the --

Mark: ROTC?

Norquist: ROTC, right. And we had a little target practice. That's about all.

Mark: The reason I asked is because you were in so early and the country was just gearing up for the war at this time. I'm wondering if you --

Norquist: World War I equipment.

Mark: Yeah. I was wondering if you had --

Norquist: Oh, sure. Things were stamped 1917, 1918. They were stamped that, yeah.

Mark: Not the top of the line shall we say.

Norquist: No.

Mark: Or maybe that was the top of the line.

Norquist: It had a faint musty, medicinal smell about them. They'd been in storage a long time. Especially things made of cloth. Even our helmets were the old flat helmets of World War I, you know with little rounded top and sort of a flat, no shield on the back of the neck.

Mark: So, as for your voyage overseas, you describe it very well in your book here. By the way, to anyone listening, this interview should be supplemented by the book. It's a very fascinating --

Norquist: It's still in libraries in various places. I know it's in Milwaukee. Schwartz Book Store over there has it.

Mark: Our bookstore has it upstairs.

Norquist: Yeah. And University Book Store has had copies. They may still have it. I don't know.

Mark: So, I shan't dwell on that too much. I usually go through a spiel about did you get seasick and that kind of thing but that's well covered in there. I want to jump ahead a little bit to everyday life as a soldier in the Philippines prior to the war. What did you guys do for fun? What were your duties like? That sort of thing.

Norquist: Well, let's take the duties first because that's what I ran into first. I was assigned right away to working in a ward and there I took temperatures, and took care of bedpans, and saw to it that any problems were reported to the nurse. Just usual things like that. This was Hospital #1. There was a Hospital—#2, rather—there was a Hospital #1 in Manila, Sternberg Hospital, and this one was McKinley.

Mark: And this wasn't in Manila? Or it was?

Norquist: No, it was outside Manila. In fact, we went on a trolley to get there. It was like an inter-urban. It was old equipment and it wobbled a great deal, I remember. But I did that and we had to do little things like giving sitz baths to people, and seeing that people got ointment put on them if they needed, and so forth. Just routine things like that. We had no great authority.

Mark: What sort of working schedule did you have?

Norquist: Yeah, that was easy. Yeah, we sometimes we'd have night duty, sometimes day duty, but we had plenty of time off and usually people would gravitate to Manila. I wanted to see the country right around Fort McKinley though, so I went to a little village called Guadeloupe. There was an old, old gigantic monastery church that lay in ruins. The walls were still standing and there was moss and even small trees growing out of the tops of the arches and so forth. I remember thinking about the monks that had once been there. And I went into the little villages and everywhere I went I heard music playing. People playing guitars and singing. And little children. The huts that are up above the ground on stilts, and the pigs down below taking whatever was thrown down to them, and so forth. I saw the Pasig River which made it into "Believe It or Not", Ripley's column, because it's the only river that, for any great distance, goes in two directions at one time just because of the way the current happens to come and the way the tides would come in so that you could see people going along on one side of the river drifting and people on the other side drifting for a considerable distance.

Mark: Yeah, I've heard of that actually.

Norquist: Have you really? Yeah. And nearby, the trains would go by and I'd watch them because of my love for railroads. I still watch the trains.

Mark: It sounds like you very interested in the Philippine countryside --

Norquist: Yeah.

Mark: And going abroad.

Norquist: Yeah, I was. I enjoyed it. And I went to Manila.

Mark: I assume that was different than a country village with the --

Norquist: Oh, yeah.

Mark: Would you describe Manila 1941.

Norquist: Well, it was kind of a sleepy, it was a city, a big city. It had wide, broad boulevards and it had great buildings, great government buildings, magnificent buildings—some of which were ruined in the war. It had apartments that were gigantic. MacArthur lived in a penthouse on top of one of them. It had parks. There was a park called the Luneta where there were band concerts and some of us used to go down and listen to the band concerts, and they were good. I went to church, too. I went to United Church of Manila. I still remember Azcarrago and Lepanto streets and the minister there talked in four languages, not at once though. And took us for a ride in his terraplane car, a few of us that were there. My friend Don Sloat (sp??) and Heal (sp??)—I forget his first name—and others. Took us for a ride and took us to a restaurant where they served roast suckling pig and I couldn't get myself to eat it but the others did [laughs]. At the church I fell in love with the organist of the church. She was a beautiful, mestiza—partly Spanish and partly native Filipino.

Mark: You mentioned that in the book actually. I was curious as to the makeup of the church. I mean, how much of it was—'cause Philippines is predominantly a Catholic country—so I'm wondering how much of the church was Filipino and how much was American.

Norquist: Oh, I would say that two-thirds were Filipino and maybe more than that. And then there were some that were, people that were English-speaking although those people if they were Protestant tended to go to the Central Students Church. There were, in the town there were several Catholic churches where English, there'd be an English service, too. I did visit a convent—I mentioned it in there—where they served us hot cocoa. Very sweet nuns, very lovely people. But anyway, the thing about Eliza Robles who was the organist, was very beautiful. She had one of these diaphanous dresses on. Very lovely. Things stirred in my heart, you know, so to speak.

Mark: Well, you were a young guy.

Norquist: And I asked her, I knew she loved music. In conversation I found that out. So I asked her if she'd go to the Manila symphony concert on the 9th of December. Need I say more? We were confined to quarters. I never kept that date and I don't know what ever happened to her. But I still think of her now and then. And I think of a little poem by a person named Gooch (sp??) and in it he—I may not have all the words right, but “I saw a lady passing by. Her face, her figure caught my eye. I did but see her passing by and yet I love her ‘til I die.” You know, I admit that I saw Eliza Robles probably three times only at church and yet I have that feeling that comes over me after all these years and I'd like to know what happened to her but I never found out [laughs]. I'm delaying on that too much. You want to ask other things.

Mark: No, that's quite interesting actually. It sounds like Manila was an exciting place to be.

Norquist: Oh, yeah. We wandered around. Had a great time.

Mark: See, when I was in the service Manila, of course, had a reputation, a seedier reputation.

Norquist: Oh, well, it had that.

Mark: It had that, too?

Norquist: Oh, sure. Yeah. And I'm sure a lot of people—I had been so indoctrinated through the years that I managed to—well, I didn't get much time there either or I might have gotten into a problem but there were people at the fort where we were that had, they shacked up. Some of them were married men with children at home but they shacked up and had a Filipino woman who would tend to their needs, feed them and so forth. It was never talked about except in a very casual way.

Mark: In your book here, you mentioned that you played on a radio station in a band. I was interested in how you got involved in that.

Norquist: Well, it was because the morale people in the Army wracked their brains to think how they could help to make young soldiers far from home happy and maybe fit in with their PR needs so they scoured the area and my friends all said, “He plays a mean trumpet.” And so I went there and one of my friends, in fact, accompanied me. He was an accomplished musician. And there were guitars there and we just played things. Whatever came to mind. I was supposed to get a guitar, come back and get it. That never eventuated. It wouldn't have lasted long probably anyway. But I did hang onto the trumpet the whole time. There were times it was taken away from me, once by a man who hurled it off some rocks which does wonders for a trumpet. The whole bell section was wrapped back and I, the best I could, pushed on it until I got

it back into a semblance of its original shape. Yeah, I carried that trumpet the whole time.

Mark: Uhm, oh yeah, in your hospital, what kinds of patients did you have? I mean it's peacetime.

Norquist: Yeah, it was people in there with gastro-intestinal problems, and people who had picked up venereal disease. In those days, sulfathiazole was about the only thing they had to give them and sitz baths. They'd sit in potassium permanganate and I don't know what a medic today would say about that but they did. And skin problems; there were a lot of skin diseases. Overexposure to the sun caused people to get keratosis and so forth. These were treated as best they could. I myself began to get keratosis and I still have had, I've had that trouble and I've had cancers taken off. One right on my face. I had it fixed here and the doctor said, "Now," he said, "if you come back once more"—she said—"if you come back once more, we can do a cosmetic job on that so it won't show." I said, "Listen, at my age I don't have any pretense." so I let it be as it is.

Mark: Uhm, so December 7. The attack on Pearl Harbor and soon after the invasion of the Philippines. If you would, just describe your experiences during that period. When did you first hear of the bombing?

Norquist: The night before we had been to Tagaytay Ridge, not far from Manila. We were taken there by truck and there we had a big picnic and we rode around on little ponies. They had little ponies that were so small that I could drag my feet at the same that I rode on them. And there were young Filipino girls there. It was all very proper. There was dancing and so forth, music, a little band playing. It was a delightful experience and the evening was balmy and mild. It was just good to be there. And the sweet scent of flowers in the area—it made it sort of paradise, you might say. So, we came back and the next morning they called us all out on the parade ground and they told us that Pearl Harbor had been attacked and that we would be next. As we were, within hours—I think within 20 hours anyway. But anyway, they put us through a gas mask drill and that's the only thing that happened for the time being and we were just supposed to go about our duties and they said there was some possibility that we would receive casualties and have to take care of them but that the chances are that the Japanese, if they invaded, would be confined to the coastal area and that within a week's time, probably, the whole thing would be contained and there wouldn't, the war would not likely last very long.

Mark: Did you think that, too?

Norquist: I was skeptical. I was skeptical because I had read about other places, you know, where they had already—well, China—and I had read about that a great

deal and the horrendous things that happened in China. But then, of course, they began to attack in the Philippines. We learned about the landings along, up in Guyan (sp??). I have read books that tell about the military mistakes that were made at that time by the high brass, but that's another subject. I wish I could think of the book that is the best one on that subject. It's an Irish name—not Fitzpatrick but something like that. I've got it at home. I can give it to you later if you want. But anyway, it wasn't long before Japanese planes came and our planes were sitting—at Clark Field—just sitting there. They had come in, a good many of them had come in some time before and there was no great hurry to get them away.

Mark: Even after --

Norquist: Oh, yeah.

Mark: You had been alerted and the gas mask drill, the planes were still on the tarmac.

Norquist: Oh, yeah. The whole story of how the high brass allowed all this to happen has been told by many an historian. So we began to get the casualties from Clark Field. I remember feeling what a sense of pity and I mean, there were amputations, there were many things going on. And we were busy bringing people up in stretchers and so forth. One Japanese aviator was brought in and he had been almost killed by the Filipinos but the Americans had brought what was left of him up there and I was one of those that cared for him and I remember feeling what a sense of pity, even for him, even though I should hate him. But what a pity as he lay there dying. And more so I felt it in regard to men, the young men of our, American men that died. And I happened to go out in back where the big garbage bins were and there were not completely closed bags, and pieces of men—hands and feet and whatnot, guts—and I could see that. What a pity. I mean, I was learning pretty fast what war was like. And then we were sent down to open up a new hospital in Manila because they were getting so many casualties from Cavite along the harbor area and so forth. And I remember seeing them brought in. One man in particular I was to care for along with others. The back part of his head was gone but he was still alive and I just remember feeling such a sense of pity about it all. And then, of course, the bombs were falling here and there, too. And this was a new kind of a fright for everybody except the old veterans who had been into things at other times.

Mark: So, looking back—it may seem like a silly question but I'm going to ask it anyway—did you feel prepared for the eventuality of war? And when the casualties started to come in and the bombs started to fall near you did you feel prepared in any way?

Norquist: No, not really. I had seen very little of death in my life. I didn't feel prepared. I don't think there were too many people that did feel prepared but you did what you were told and hoped it would all come out all right. And then there were rumors that the tanks were coming closer and closer and so forth. It happened that there were some big warehouses near us and the word had gotten out that it was all right to go over there and to get all the food you wanted and so we had a huge Christmas feast. Canned goods of all kinds. Fruit and what not, and hams and whatnot. Then it wasn't long after, the 29th of December to be accurate, when we were taken over by a small, it was really a tugboat I think, a small craft to go to Corregidor and we felt good about going to Corregidor because we felt that Corregidor was well armed and the—well, Dorothy Thompson, who was a columnist, had said that the Japanese would never dare to fly over Corregidor because the anti-aircraft was so good. As a matter of fact, they had Boufords (sp??) anti-aircraft. And we didn't know anything about the fact that the great rifles—now these are huge guns—were pointed out to sea because that's the only direction from which gunboats could come. And they could not be traversed back toward Bataan, for example, when they would have been most useful.

There were mortars, however, that could be spun back. I remember being on the receiving end when the mortars fell somewhat near us and that was horrendous. You could actually see mortars spinning in the air, on their high trajectory you could see them faintly as they spun out there. They would go in a high arc and come down on the artillery the Japanese had behind us in Bataan. That's later though. We were there on Corregidor and we were, many of us, were assigned at first to the hospital and we began our work there, and then we were farmed out to various areas of Corregidor that were beginning to receive the impact of bombings. I was taken to a place where there was an anti-aircraft shelter. It was right near artillery that was in place there and the call came out for us to go into, an air raid shelter had been hit. It was one that hadn't been completed. It had actually railroad iron over it and then rocks and dirt and everything but they hadn't armored the sides of it and the bomb fell and it came down on 30 men. So we went there and the bombs were still falling. I can still remember some feeling the impact in the air from some that were not far away. And the officer that took us out, he said, "I'll see that you boys all get bronze stars for this." but he must have forgotten because I never got it. Not that it matters. You couldn't eat one anyway if you did have it. So, anyway, we got to the place and there were engineers that were digging and propping which they knew how to do, and we were there with our stretchers. We would rush them up to the hospital area. And the hospital area had been hit a little bit on the upper part of it but it was still usable. So, one time I was up there at the hospital when it was meal time and I ate up there and I was just about to eat a piece of pie and there was a terrible shaking of the whole building and a great noise and we were told to go down into the first floor area which is a little below ground level and I left my pie there and I came back later to eat it and found that it had been spoiled by the

rocks. I never got to eat that. I regretted it later [laughs]. We brought out 30 men from there and three were alive at the time we got to the hospital and two of them died and one lived on into prison camp life, could be alive today for all I know. I hope he is. But I remember feeling a great sense of pity about this too. I mean, this was one of my dominant feelings through all this, you know.

Mark: Pity for whom?

Norquist: For the guys that had been hit. Yeah. And I felt hatred for the planes up there and for war in general. By the way, it's a little chilly in here and I'm feeling a little shaky. Is there any way to get a little heat put on?

Mark: I can try and get you a coat or something.

Norquist: Oh, don't bother. That's all right.

Mark: We keep it chilly because it's, we preserve the artifacts.

Norquist: Of course you do. Yeah, yeah. Well, you can cut this out later. But at any rate, then the call went out to send us to Bataan because—I don't need to go into this story. You've gotten that from other people, no doubt, about how people went down into Bataan. MacArthur had plenty of time to send down material in great quantity but he didn't do it so there was very little down there really. And we set up a hospital in the jungle. Meanwhile, Hospital #1 had gone farther toward the end of Bataan, away from where the fighting was beginning to take shape, and we were there to give triage and to separate those that would get major treatment as best we could, and those that would be patched up and sent right back again. And we had not only Americans but Filipinos that we worked on. I remember being in triage for awhile and I felt terrible having that job, to choose to send a man to go back though he still had things wrong with him. But if a man could walk, if he could use his fingers and his eyes, why, even though he may have other problems, why, they'd send him back again 'cause they needed them so badly. I also worked in grave registration for awhile. There we would prepare the corpses for burial with honor, and the chaplains would take care of that. Villages got hit not too far away too. I remember one time at Cabcaben, there was a call went for us to go down there and there were a lot of casualties there. And I remember one woman was sitting on a rock, and she was screaming, and she had a piece of meat in her, burned meat, in her hand. It was her baby. Again, I felt that rage against those planes. A pity at what was happening in this war. We still hoped we'd get rescued in the early part of our time in Bataan. We'd go up on a platform that looked out and we thought we might see ships coming. Once I saw some ships and I ran down and I said, "There are ships coming." Old Hanz went up there and came back and said they were Japanese ships. But we believed. We had heard about the thousands of planes and hundreds of ships

that would come and so forth. We had that hope in our hearts. Food was running low. Corregidor had supplies of food and they would, they still had means of getting them over; they had little boats that they could bring them over on in the night. So the Army transports would go by and they were in a big hurry to get to where the men were in the front and they would, just as the truck went, they would heave off some boxes and that was for the hospital. The men would go out hunting too. They'd go out after lizard tails and some men even ate monkeys. I was offered it; I couldn't eat it because it looked too much like a baby but others were not so squeamish. Snakes, if a snake came out of the jungle, and some of them were sizable, bring them back alive. What was his name? Buck or whatever his name was, used to bring back some of his specimens of huge snakes from the Philippines. And the medics weren't supposed to have guns but if a snake came out of the jungle, that snake would be dead very shortly. And by the way, the jungle was so impenetrable there that you can be eight feet away from somebody and not see him. It's very thick. We didn't do too much traveling. I did go down to see Hospital #1 for awhile and came back again. I saw Japanese prisoners that had been taken that were there. Some of them would not have reached there except that the Americans brought them back under orders. The Filipinos, being there homeland, they weren't so charitable. But I saw them and --

Mark: What were your impressions?

Norquist: --they were, well, they were treated fairly well. They had on decent clothing, they had cots, mattresses and blankets and pillows, and all that, and were fed the same food that the hospital personnel got. At that time there was still enough, in fact, I heard later that as the time for the end came our people tried to treat them in every way as best they could because they thought it might leave a good impression with whoever came through. And that's what happened. They came through and were seemingly impressed with how they had been treated there. At any rate, the days dragged on and we heard of how the line was pushing closer and closer and we could hear the artillery at all times. A lookout was kept because some Japanese would be in trees and would shoot people. They had tennis shoes, by the way, that helped them in the climbing. It had a split for the toes; tennis shoes. And they were dressed in dark clothes, those that did that. Plane, we still had a couple of P-40s, and one of them was made out of several P-40s that had been cannibalized, put together. And one time one of these planes was flying over and, by the way I should tell you that how those bombers could have been used if they'd been used, you know, even at Lingayen Gulf. They weren't sent against, when there was a small invasion. They were never ordered to go to Lingayen Gulf. In any numbers anyway. You can read all that from historians.

Mark: Sure.

Norquist: But this plane came down in jungle and we were sent out to bring back the pilot, dead or conceivably alive, and we saw the plane just blown to smithereens, you might say, by the impact. The motor was way off, you know. We came back. We couldn't find the pilot. We looked in every direction and eventually we went back to camp and here was the pilot sitting, having tea with some nurses and telling about his experience. But he had landed in the softness of trees and that had saved his life. He was hardly scratched. Amazing. But at last, of course, we knew that the enemy was going to come through and we could hear ammunition being demolished and everything and the order came through for surrender, against the orders of MacArthur by the way. He wanted everybody to die in the last attempt if necessary, but our own officers had cooler heads and prevailed. General Wainwright and King and others. The day came when we could expect them and we took our flag down, saluted it and took it down, folded up, and I think somebody put it away somewhere or they burned it. I don't know which. But then the flag of surrender went up. Something died inside us, putting up that white flag of surrender. This can't be happening to us. We wondered how we would be treated. Some said, well, they will probably treat us according to the Geneva Convention. Others said, no, they treat everybody badly and we're lucky if we even aren't all put to death. Well, the truth was somewhere in between, you know. I had a camera, by the way. We were told that we should get rid of cameras because we could get killed if we were found with a camera. And I was sorry that I threw my camera down the latrine because later the officers, they knew I had this camera and I had a supply of film, and they wanted to document things, and they had means of getting it out to Manila, and I had to tell them that I'd thrown it away. And I've always felt a great sense of disappointment over that.

Mark: But you did keep your diary though.

Norquist: Yeah, but I kept it hidden. Yeah, I had a pack that had a big flap down there and I always kept it below that flap. And we weren't inspected anyway oddly enough.

Mark: Yeah, that's what surprised me. I would have imagined --

Norquist: Well, they figured that these are harmless people. These are medics, they don't bite. Although they did take little things. I had a little native flute and one of them took that. They didn't take my trumpet. So then we were taken down to, after some time, we were taken down to Mariveles. The patients stayed there and some people stayed there to take care of them. But a lot of the Filipinos just melted, that could walk at all, just melted off into the jungle. And then we were taken down to Mariveles and we stayed in what had been a munitions area and some of the buildings were made of corrugated steel and were badly dented and torn away in places. And then we were marched back up to, right past where we had been, the hospital, past Cabcan, that little

town I told you about, and marching to Lamau, Lamay and finally San Fernando. And then some of us went off to Manila and stayed at Bilibid Prison. But on the way we saw corpses by the side of the road that had never been buried.

Mark: American corpses I assume?

Norquist: Yeah. And, again, that terrible sense of pity, thinking about how their people—I came from a very close family, not only my immediate family but the larger family, extended family—and I could just think that for every one of them. And a lot of wrecked vehicles too. Drawing of a couple of them in here. And some Filipinos when we stopped at villages would actually come up with things like orange drink, pop, you know, and bananas, and things and if they thought the Japanese guards weren't looking right then then they'd come up to us and we could trade. We could give a fountain pen or whatever, you know. I traded off my shoes, shiny Florsheim shoes, for some cakes of pony sugar. Now that's made of the sweepings in the sugar mill and it was fed to animals. So I got some of that and shared it with my friends. I got a few rotten bananas and we enjoyed those, too. And we went on our way again. Finally, we got to Cabanatuan prison camp—well, we went right by it. We went to the town and there we were kept under a schoolhouse for awhile and there was feces and debris from, and they were gone before in the march. A hellish smell there, just terrible. Some of the men began to go crazy. Scream, yell. One man said, "There is no war. There is no war. There is no war. Roosevelt is not president. Kasan (sp??) is not president. I am your president. Oh, please won't somebody help me? Please won't somebody help me?" And the medics gave him something to quiet him. Later on, in prison camp, he died. I recorded that in the diary, too. I recorded the little touches about any person. I wrote about their families, their girlfriends, that all in the book. One, I didn't mention this, there's one fella from St. Paul. I went to bring him, other prisoners at Cabanatuan, and I brought him an egg that I got hold, gotten a hold of, because things are traded at the fence, and he told me "If you get back, would you please look up my girlfriend?" and he wrote down her name, Pearl—I won't mention her last name—and the address and everything. I hung on to it. I went to see her and she says, "I don't want to hear about him. I've got a new boyfriend now." and that was the end. I had all I could do to keep from slapping her face, you know. After he thought of her in his dying days.

And my good friend Mashbruan that had played—I should tell you we went to a prison camp farther on and then we came back again to Cabanatuan. It was only one spigot in our area that we knew about anyway so some of us that could walk would take clusters of canteens and bring back water to the others. I must say that all the way through our experience people cared about each other. There was great comradeship within the camp. Very, very seldom would you hear of anything else except for little fights that occurred. And

usually they couldn't do much damage to each other because they were so weak, you know. But Bill Mashbruan, that was only, I think, a very short time after we got to Cabanatuan and he was dying of dysentery and one day I went to see him and he said—I brought him something—and I said, “Bill, how ya' doing?” He said, “Norquist, I'm not going to make it. Gee, you guys, you fellas have been good to me.” I said, “Oh, you're going to make it, Bill. Of course, you're going to make it.” but he was dead the next day. This kind of thing happened. And you felt daily that sense of pity. I never got used to all these things that were happening. The people I worked on; there was one had impetigo with great scabs and his eyes were scabbed together, and all we would do was take clean water that had been boiled and with cotton we would just wipe, all we wiped, anyway it felt better, then some of the scabbing would come off. That's the only thing we had to give him. By then you didn't have much in the way of anything to really, although we did get in some supplies. As we went along they brought in some things from the what were called the Dutch East Indies, I think. Probably a part of Indonesia. Among the things that were brought in, besides some bandaging and everything, were some aspirin tablets and they were coated with chocolate. And some of the men knew that if you put a laundry soap bar under your arm and leave it there for awhile you're temperature would go up. So they did that and they would go in with this temperature, they'd take their temperature, you're probably coming down with malaria, and they'd get these candy-coated, and they'd leave them in their mouth until they began to taste the aspirin, and swallow them. But they loved licking that chocolate. Many of the deaths occurred early on because the Japanese were not ready for so many prisoners. Their own records show that.

Mark: Right. I was going to ask about that sort of thing. What's the, in your experience, of those that even made to Cabanatuan, how many were left by the time you went off to Japan? Would you say 50%?

Norquist: I would only know about the ones that, and they disappeared from my gauge because many of them were taken to other places. Some were taken to, in my older age now I get lapses of memory and I can remember a lot of specific trivia but I can't remember some other things. It's a funny thing. Your mind does strange things to you but it's great to be alive anyway, you know. It's great to be alive. What was it you just asked me?

Mark: Oh, about the attrition rate.

Norquist: I can't give you any statistical thing. I've read various statistics that vary widely. You'd have to ask some statistician of some count to give you that. But I would think that of the fellas that were with me, I would think that probably a third of them had died or were so badly gone that they might as well be dead.

Mark: I was going to say I assume that was a daily occurrence, at least in the beginning.

Norquist: Oh, yeah. Well, then of course, we had a lot of patients and the patients especially were dying off. The triage was such that they would just put some people in a big barracks to die because there was nothing could be done. People that were pretty far gone with dysentery in particular because they were getting thinner and thinner. Some had the puffiness of edema, too. I drew pictures. I used to have a lot of them but they've been lost but some of them are here in the book. Yeah. I worked in that zero ward for awhile so I was right there with all that. I could have, well, I did pick up dysentery, I did pick up dysentery. But I managed to survive. Catholic chaplain helped keep me alive by the way. He could, he was one of the channels for distribution for things that came from Manila. Filipinos would

[END TAPE 1, SIDE A]

Mark: Okay, yeah, we're back. So we're talking about your working the wards in the camp.

Norquist: Yeah. And this, even in retrospect, I feel a disturbance within myself when I think of a lot of what we had to see from day-to-day. People that might have a little meal and then maybe just a short time later you'd see the person sitting there and you realize he's dead. Or people that you saw last night and this goes for the corpsman as well as the patients. I think we had about 1,500 or so men in our section and then there were about 8,000 to 10,000—maybe it started out at 10,000 and kept going down. I do know that there were 2,000, let's see—no, 1,000, about 1,000 maybe 200, in our cemetery after the, at the time the first year had gone by. That much out of the whole camp, of course. But being in the wards was unnerving. People, all of us, looking like skeletons and all of us, we had to actually walk people out to the latrines which were just merely slit trenches, you know, with boards put next to them and you'd stand there, straddling it. Some men didn't even wear trousers because they were going continually. One of the jobs that those of us that worked in those wards, we had to just continually clean up because that was all the time there was nothing but stench.

Mark: As time went on, 'cause you mention the unpreparedness of the Japanese, I'm wondering as time went on, did conditions improve?

Norquist: Oh, yes. Yeah. Yeah, they began to get supplies in gradually, gradually. And what was really a shot in the arm was the coming of Red Cross parcels. And they began in 1942. I think in the autumn of '42 we got our first parcel and of course it did a great for morale, quite apart from the nutritious because it had come from the United States and you had the feeling that somebody cared, you know. We had these parcels, they weren't addressed to us personally

although my folks did send 11 parcels and I got 1 of them and in it I could recognize some of my father's own things. His razor, for example, his razor. They even included the sales slips from the well-known department stores, the Golden Rule, and the Emporium, and so forth. But the Red Cross parcels came in and only later on I heard rumors of it but did I learn that they came on a Swedish ship, neutral ship, that had been given over to the Red Cross and I learned later that even the United States was instrumental in keeping that arrangement afloat. It was able to, there were other ships, too, but this was the only one that could go to the Orient and not worry about fuel. It was a diesel ship, had two diesel engines built in Denmark, and it was able to go all the way to the Orient and from the farthest point where it could refuel and then go in anywhere it wanted to and get out again. And that ship probably transported more Red Cross parcels to anybody in the Orient, whether civilian or military, than all the rest of means of getting things to us. That one ship. If it hadn't been for that, I'd have been dead. So these parcels came in around Christmas time. We got them and morale began to go up and even the patients began to look better because they had packed vitamins and things into these things. Even the chocolate bar was chock full of vitamins, you see. So morale began to get better and a semblance of normal life began to, people can adapt. What is the old poem? "Even in the muck and scum of things something sings" you know. Even the one sergeant remarked about that even the corpses looked better. He said, "Pretty soon they're going to come up to our standards."

Mark: Talk about your grim humor.

Norquist: Oh, yeah. Well, there's a lot of grim humor in prison camp. And we began to get organized. The church got organized all over the community and they had a program of visiting the ones that were worse off and so forth. And the chaplains held service. And then the doctors and chaplains and some of us enlisted people helped to organize interest groups. We called it our university. And people could take even mathematics. If they were so-minded, they could take algebra in prison camp. Or literature, or languages. And this always in spare time, you know. But there was a hunger for something that would keep your mind going. So this did a great deal for morale. And they organized hand craft contests on occasion. You might say, what on earth could people make things out of, but there were scraps of wood here and there and people could find nails, they had old toothbrushes that were worn out. And we had some men that went out on truck-driving details and they could bring back things like wood or paper or whatever when they went out into the Japanese on the truck details. I made a little model train. Actually a locomotive, a tender, and refrigerator car, and caboose. If I'd had the energy to do it, I might have come up with probably a 100-car train before I was through. And people, a man that had been a violin maker got the truck drivers to bring back specific wood and they somehow found it and they brought it back and he made two violins in prison camp. You must understand that the personnel

among the Japanese changed from time to time. Now and then we'd have a camp commander that wasn't particularly cruel. Always, of course, they had authority over us and life and death power but as time went on things got a little bit better. If, in fact, if a Japanese hurt an American during one period, wrongly, that person would be punished by his commanding officer. And there was one case where a man was fairly near the fence but, you know, he was working on a little garden. And the Japanese soldier enticed him to come over, he ordered him to come over toward the fence. And when he got there he shot him. And there were witnesses to this. And our officers went to the Japanese officer. He called the man in, took his own pistol out, and shot him in the head because he had exceeded what he was supposed to do. We could see them getting punished by beatings. I mean, we got beatings but I mean there was some comfort in the thought that they got beatings; the grunt in the Japanese army got beatings. In fact, if a man stole something, he got his arm broken. That happened there. Our men stood in awe of that kind of thing happening, you know, on the other side.

Mark: I was going to ask about the atrocities a little later but let's explore it right now. Reading your diary, I was, perhaps it's just the stereotype that you get until you really start to explore something, but I was surprised that there weren't as many atrocity stories. There weren't as many as I would have expected. I assume they happened. And I don't know if it's because you didn't record them or --

Norquist: Well, I think a lot of the atrocities took place on the march. And again, I suppose it would be rare to find an army that wouldn't shoot people if they tried to escape. That goes with part of the hell of war. In fact, I almost got, I did, there's one little portion where we were marching where I said, "I can't go any farther." and I sat down. You may remember reading that. And handed my goods over to friends and sat down and then I saw them coming toward me with their guns and bayonets and I suddenly had adrenaline or something in me and I got up and ran, got back among my friends. That temptation never arose again I'll tell you.

Mark: I would assume these too were daily occurrences? At least beatings if not --

Norquist: Well, on the march that was true, yeah.

Mark: But in camp that's not necessarily true.

Norquist: Well, it usually was for some reason, or it might have been just the mood of the person over us, you know. There were times if I lump together the whole time, of course, a lot of times although we had to work hard at times, a lot of times there was boredom and in between these things there'd be these terrible things. I mentioned one man that had actually gotten out of the camp and they brought him back and they made us, they lined us up and they gave him a

slow death with bayonets. He was twitching on the ground and again I felt the horror. Another time, in fact several times, there were men that were, that they thought had tried to escape or were caught trading with the Filipinos and they would sometimes tie them to a post in the hot sun. In the Philippines that is punishment. Some went delirious of course. Some not only had to stand tied to the post but then they were made to dig trenches and then they were shot and they fell in the trenches they themselves had made. So there were these things all the time. You never know when you were going to get beaten up.

Even in Japan where things were pretty much more professional on the Japanese side they could be cruel, there could be certain persons that were cruel. One fella by the name of Watanabe (sp??) was extremely cruel and would beat up men on the last pretext. He would go through the barracks and if he found that the blankets weren't folded just right—you each had one blanket there, kind of a hoarse looking blanket, a horse blanket—and if it weren't folded, he might take a mess kit and slash the man back and forth across the face. And that was done. And one time we were standing in line and we were told by him that when he speaks we must listen to him. And we did. But a piece of paper went floating by in the wind and I looked at it and he called me out from the others, as I'd seen done to others a number of times, and he said, “Do you not understand? When I speak, you must listen to me donhonoro (??).” And I said, “Yes, sir.” And so he began hitting me. He hit me hard and I fell down. I could make no defense and he knocked me out eventually and I woke up in the barracks. Immediately I got up and began looking around for pieces of paper because that was the last order we had been given; we would go out and pick up trash around the area. And I didn't find until about two years ago that a friend of mine by the name of Francois, at great risk to himself, and he was still one of the ones that kind of held his strength some, and he had picked me up like a baby and carried me to the barracks and put me down and come back and got in line and they didn't punish him. So these things did happen but I say some of the Japanese could be kindly. Now, some men that were in the same camps I was in would go back and would say none of the Japanese were decent, they were all, they were all—there's something that comes over people, that they want to make it sound worse than it even was and it was bad enough, lord knows. But there is that in people. Like I've had people who were in the same camp with me who back here would tell everybody “I never got one Red Cross parcel the whole time I was over there.” and there's something about people that they want to do that. Maybe we all condition our minds at times to do things like that. I don't know, but that did happen. There were times as a matter of fact when, well, once we had a radio right in the camp and we were, it was set to that station they wanted us to hear. It was an English broadcast and all it told about was Japanese victories and how wrong the United States was and we were allowed to hear that. Now and then we'd pick up tidbits about what was happening in the world by listening. But that was a relatively short time. A

decent camp commander. That same camp commander, for example, even at the time we had Memorial Day at the cemetery, brought a wreath out and placed it there. Personally made that gesture. Other camp commanders were the opposite. So it all depends on what there was.

Mark: So how would you account for these differences? I mean, again, as you mention trying to escape --

Norquist: Well, and in the Army outfit there's some officers that are so bad that the men secretly longed to shoot them. I think it's just the difference among people. And Japanese are no different than other people. Go among a bunch of Africans or people from Timbuktu you're going to find some horses ass, so to speak, and some kindly people, and some that are both. Sometime good and sometime bad. Some Japanese were unpredictable. They might actually make friendly gestures and then turn around and beat the man up that they'd just befriended. They could do little things. Like I distinctly remember going to see a movie, they brought movies in for awhile, and they, that was true throughout the whole Cabanatuan thing. And we'd see it on the backside of a sheet and the Japanese would see it on the right side of the sheet so we had to learn to think backwards as far as what was printed on it. One time I was sitting there and the Japanese came over to us, walked right up to us, handed us a half-eaten bag of peanuts, and happened to hand it to me, and we shared it. Well, I mean, this does show that they're not, they weren't all. And I think that the American people need a little, even at this date, need a little corrective about that because the image of the Japanese is such that some people hate all Japanese, even the people in our own country that were put in concentration camps and suffered greatly. And they were, some of them, two and three generation Americans. And they will say, at the time it was said that they would finally get some recompense for their losses after probably the majority of them had died, they say "They shouldn't give those bastards anything. After all, look what they did to us at Pearl Harbor." Well, it wasn't these Americans. But prejudice is a tricky thing. It makes reality out of unreality and it tailors its feelings about things. That did happen in prison camp and to this day there are, some of the ex-prisoners of war, still hate Japanese with great vehemence. Even if a nice Japanese lady were introduced to them they would turn and walk the other way.

Mark: I'll come back to that 'cause I've got a line of questioning about veterans --

Norquist: Japanese still face prejudice. There are some people that are aching to have relations go bad with Japan because this would justify their feelings. And they're one of our best customers even though they do maybe not buy as many automobiles as we'd like. Incidentally, the trade is such that if you take it on a per capita basis given the size of our population and the size of the Japanese population, they're buying as much from us as we're buying from them. If you put it on a per capita basis. That's another subject though.

Mark: Yeah. I find those trade matters bamboozling anyway.

Norquist: Yeah.

Mark: A couple of things I want to cover from your diary here. I was interested by the amount of times you discuss rumors. And rumors in camp, I get the impression that this was an incredible source --

Norquist: Well, this must be like what a junky gets out of getting a shot. Because at the time, it made us feel good. And there were people that started rumors with just that in mind. Cynically.

Mark: I was going to ask, where do you think these things get started? Some were eerily on the mark and some were wildly fantastic.

Norquist: Well, you see, for instance, various ingenious things happened. Like we had men that were good on radios and the Japanese would bring over their radios to get repaired and in repairing them they would always ask for extra parts that weren't needed to put that radio back in shape. The parts would come in, put aside. They keep track of what they had and what they didn't have. First thing you know there were clandestine radios secreted away and ways of listening to them; in dark corners, behind soundproofing. And so we would get, some of them came from those radios, from the radio that was there. And then, too, later on we'd get an infusion of new people that had been captured and we could talk to them. They weren't always brought to us. That was true in Japan. Some of them were the men that were shot down from planes and we'd see a plane go down and we'd feel an ache for those men that were in that plane, but sometimes little puffs would come out behind and now and then they would come to our camp and they would fill us in on what had been happening and how things were really going our way in the world and so forth. So that was part of it. And partly was the Japanese frankly told us about some things that happened. They told us when Roosevelt died and that we learned the next day I think. They just announced it to us. They got us out and told us. They said that they regretted to have to tell us that our leader had died. There is that noblesse oblige that sometimes occurs in, even in the military. Like the British had great admiration for Rommel, many British authors have written good things in a professional viewpoint about Rommel. Would that Hitler had treated him with such courtesy he might be alive today. I don't know whether that would be possible. He'd be pretty old.

Mark: Yeah, he'd be about 110 or something. He would have survived the war though.

Norquist: Right.

Mark: I was also struck by the sort of running commentary on food.

Norquist: Oh, yeah. Well, I mean when you are hungry, that's all you think about.

Mark: Yeah.

Norquist: Here were sergeants that had been around so to speak, and knew all about love life and its complexity and, who would sit talking about their mother's recipes. Hardly ever talking except in a passing way about girlfriends and things. Which if you've been around military places in peacetime, that's been known to come up in conversation. But that, food was the big thing. I would dream about food. I remember dreaming about one time that there was a plate, I think it was either three feet or five feet across, and it was heaped up with ice cream, and in my dream I began eating and I kept eating and I ate the whole thing. So we would dream about food almost constantly. A bag of sausages came up in one of my dreams. All sorts of things like that.

Mark: And what sort of food were you getting?

Norquist: Well, at first it was largely a ball of rice and probably very much, very little else. Just a ball of rice. Now and then when the Japanese had chicken, why the bones would drift over and the guts and the head and the feet and all that and that could be, go into the soup. Sometimes when they would have beef, let us say, or pork, why the scraps would make their way over to us and it could go into the food. Time went on. Eventually, there were times when we'd get commodities (sp??), sweet potatoes we called them, when we would even get, in other words another kind of vegetable that looked a little bit like cucumbers. Even coconuts came in on occasion and helped to make the diet better.

Mark: How was this compared to what the Japanese soldiers were eating?

Norquist: Oh, they ate better than we did by far in the Philippines. However, when we got to Japan, by and large, the Japanese issue was what we got. However, they could supplement their diet; we couldn't. Except that when we went out on working details. If we were working, let's say in the railway transfer centers, why if there were a bag of sugar, that bag might get broken. Guys would go and scoop and put it in their pockets. Later they couldn't do that because they were inspected. But they would borrow shoes from fellows that had big feet and they would fill their shoes, or they might make pouches that would hang where they wouldn't be touched, so they'd come back with food that way. And we were with British people there and some of them, you see the British sent over not only their Cambridge and Oxford graduates and their farm boys but they also sent over a great number of people that had been in prison and were given their choice—you could go in the Army and serve his

majesty in Hong Kong or Singapore or you can stay in jail—and some of them chose to go over there, caught in Malaya, wherever they were caught.

Mark: Sort of Oliver Twist types.

Norquist: Oh, yeah. And they were marvelous at stealing. They would go out, you know, and load a ship and they'd find things in the galley and come back with it and they learned which guards could be bribed by some of the things they brought back. If they were working in packaged goods, they'd find something that might be a little valuable, maybe clocks and things like that, and they'd come to the guard, walk up and hand him a clock, and allowed to go without getting inspected. And they had the most barbaric theological and biological swearing I ever heard in my life.

Mark: The British.

Norquist: These guys that had been in prison. And I don't say on this microphone but one of them brought in a whole slab of salmon that he'd got when he was working in the refrigerator cars and he lay it down in front me because he knew that I didn't use cigarettes and he said, "Aint it (blip) lovely?" Your listeners can make up what they want or write to me and I'll tell them.
[laughs]

Mark: I won't make you repeat him.

Norquist: So that's the way that went. Up in northern Japan, toward the end of the war, it was much the same as I told you about Bataan. They brought in butchered steers, they brought in desserts, they brought in a victrola and records which came from the manager of the plant.

Mark: As the war was ending though.

Norquist: Oh, yeah, as the war was ending.

Mark: It was my impression, as you just mentioned --

Norquist: In northern Japan.

Mark: Yeah.

Norquist: That was a lovely place.

Mark: We'll come to that.

Norquist: But back there in Tokyo, the most horrendous things were the bombings from American planes. I mean, even we would be shocked by what we see on the

ground and we cheered when the planes came—one half of the brain, the other half of the brain was terrorized by it all. Sometimes we'd be out in our little bus that was using charcoal, we ever get really short on gasoline we might try charcoal, and putt along about five or six miles an hour, ten miles an hour, with charcoal burning, you know. And then we'd see the sights along the way. I remember seeing, even when we were on the job I saw children wandering around and hardly with it and wounds on them and all. And I saw a little girl sitting on top of, with her bicycle all bent and the house in shambles and people, presumably her family, lying dead, and she's just sitting there. And I drew a picture of it; it's in the book. Incidentally, much later I was in Mexico and I met a great Japanese musician, Yuriko (sp??), and she, I forget her other name, but we compared notes and found that on the same day her family were killed and she was crouched behind a wall and I was probably a half mile away. And miles and miles of devastation. See the damage there was far greater than Hiroshima or Nagasaki. No comparison but it was an increase; it was not all at once. But the one fire raid, about as many people died in one fire raid, and that was a horrendous thing. The sky was ablaze.

Mark: You were in Tokyo at this time?

Norquist: Of course I was. Sometimes shrapnel would whiz through our camp. We had zigzag trenches we made. We'd dive into them when this happened, when we thought this would happen. To this day, when I hear sirens I get uneasy feelings because of that. I can say, I mean there was much that was horrendous, much diabolical even, but I say I'm a person that thinks objectively and I have to say that it could have been worse. I mean, let's face it, later in the war neither side took prisoners in many cases. There are stories of Japanese being herded into trenches and covered over alive. War brings on horrible things. My own brother saw American soldiers going around and knocking the gold out of teeth. He went ashore on, I think it was Okinawa, and he was a JG in the Navy, and saw people knocking the gold teeth out of the Japanese mouths because many of them had gold teeth. I mean these are the atrocities of war.

Mark: And of course the Jewish holocaust, too.

Norquist: Oh, yeah, yeah. Oh, that's far worse, the Jews got treated far worse than we were. The Jews, the Poles, even civilians. I mean this doesn't discount the deaths, sufferings, the awful longings for peace to come and to be reunited with loved ones and all of that. But I'm telling you the truth.

Mark: No, it's interesting to hear you say that, too.

Norquist: Yeah, yeah. And I had an open-minded naiveté about me and these things I wrote down and so forth, even trivia.

Mark: There were a million things that I made mental notes that have slipped my mind. I happened to make two hard copy notes here. One, I was wondering if you would describe the living areas in the camps, both in Cabanatuan and then in Japan as well. I mean, did you have a cot? And then if you could describe some, sort of the way the camp is administered. I assume you were administered through the American officers who reported to the Japanese.

Norquist: Yeah, but that could be overridden at any time. You always had that threat over you.

Mark: By any private?

Norquist: Oh, yeah. But then our officers could complain and they may or may not get any result. They didn't complain very often because that would have diminished the effect. Yeah, as far as the structures, they were nepa (sp??) shacks. They were, they had nepa (sp??) thatched roofs, some of them did, and then the structures were made of bamboo, and they had also bamboo sticks woven crossways. And the Philippine army training had taken place in this camp and the other one that wasn't too far away, Philippine army training. There was nothing but mud outside. Some of our fellas nurtured grass to grow.

Mark: So there are how many guys in this one building?

Norquist: Oh, about a hundred or so in one building and we slept close together so that you touched the person next to you. I mean you didn't have any gap. And this was, you know how you take reeds and you weave material? Well, we had little thin mats that were covered with that weaving and the mat was on top of bamboo slats and you felt every bone especially because you didn't have much fat left. At one time I could feel my ribs, my hips stuck out, I could put my finger around here and cross the tips around my arm.

Mark: You had to store your trumpet and your diary somewhere. I don't—it would have been very resourceful to be able to hide these things.

Norquist: Yeah. For awhile I just hid it under my things and there was talk of inspections and all and so I put them in the alter of the Catholic chaplain's chapel and then he said they were getting pretty nosy about his place and so I, there was a drainage ditch that had a lot of weeds and it was not rainy season so I put it down in there. I just laid them down inside there and they were not discovered. And then I got a big can from the mess hall. It must have been like eight inches or so in diameter, perhaps 18 inches high. And mind you I'm writing this thing on little scraps of paper so all I did was bunch them in chronological order on top of each other. I wrote, I wish I had brought with me an example, I wrote letters that high on some of what I wrote. Tiny, tiny letters. They could still be read after the war. And we typed a copy otherwise

you wouldn't have this because it wasn't, I kept them after that. They're in the State Historical Society right here if you want to see them. Some are with larger print and there are probably more drawings and everything that you don't have here. They don't have a copy of my whole book. I mean if you take all the notes, they don't have that. They have one, another condensation which is bigger than this one. But I rejected that one and used this one. But the State Historical Society has that.

Mark: Good. I was going to suggest you deposit that somewhere. As I was reading this I got the impression that you still had this in your possession.

Norquist: Well, I've got copies of what I took off on, typed off of it, and others helped me type it. I lost part of it. Somebody lost part of it.

Mark: That's a tragedy.

Norquist: But then I filled in that part from memory.

Mark: Oh, yeah. I recalled one of the things I wanted to ask and that was who survived and who didn't. I was wondering if you could tell by looking at someone, their age, their physical condition. For example, I'm sure you were always a fairly tall, lanky guy. Not a lot of meat on your bones shall we say.

Norquist: Right.

Mark: You must have an impressive constitution to have gotten through --

Norquist: Well, that's the strange thing. Sometimes the biggest guys, the guys that you know, were big boned and muscular, would go. It was hard to predict. I think mental attitude meant an awful lot. People that were busy with, well, the handicraft contest, the good discussions that we had and all sorts of things. Men discussed many things. In the case with the British, why, they discussed the Peloponnesian War and Roman history and things like that. I got in with them a little bit and enjoyed it a lot. Those of us that were musical would, well, we had one fellow that could remember the scores of things. He write down much of the Messiah and we put it on one time, such as he could remember and the rest of us would copy the music down on other sheets of paper that we got from the truck drivers and we were able to put on concerts right in the prison camp. People that kept busy tended to survive and people that sat looking at the wall, one day they might even, a good many of them would do this, they'd sit looking at the wall, maybe they'd just die there, come over, "Hey, it's time for the mess hall" and they'd flop over. Or they would go off in the weeds. They had tall weeds like the weeds that grew in the plains here. You couldn't even see very far in them sometimes. And they'd go off in the weeds and people would say, "Where's Jones?" and they'd scout around and find him lying out there just gone off to die by himself. But

mental attitude meant a great deal. I think those that had a background of thinking and being interested in affairs of the world and everything, and then the comradeship we had made a difference. I think if a fella tended to isolate himself, he was a candidate for death.

Mark: And as for the American officers above you, I'm interested in the sort of command structure and what you thought of how your superiors dealt with the issue of captivity.

Norquist: Well, I think the officers dealt better than the enlisted men by and large although you take some of the kids that had been through a lot of troubles in the Depression, not too different you know [laughs]. Yeah, but the officers, though they were together with us and worked together with us they had their own barracks. And they had certain amenities, you know, that goes --

Mark: Sure, that's expected. But there was no sense of they're getting it too easy or they're collaborating or they're weak leaders.

Norquist: I don't think, I for my part, never felt jealous. I never felt jealous. I sometimes resented a little bit the arbitrariness of one or two officers that I felt were being arbitrary. But some of them were self-sacrificial people. We even, sometimes would share their food with somebody. They were a good lot.

Mark: The last note I had here had to do with spirituality. As we discussed, you had had sort of spiritual aspirings I guess you would say.

Norquist: Yeah, that was the cynic unknown for a lot of us. It was the thing that you felt you got a great deal of, you could always pray. And for us prayer was a living reality to a living God. For a lot of people, and maybe for me at times, prayer is performance, when I stand in a church and read a liturgy or something. But it was very vital and real. Very ecumenical. I mean, you'd have Baptists and Presbyterians and Methodists having a prayer meeting together. Guys that hadn't been particularly religious before sought that. Many people became Christian in a conversion way and wanted to be baptized, and were baptized, and some of them wanted to be baptized by immersion so we made a thing out of canvas with a heavy wooden frame and took these big cans, square cans of water and pour in there and somebody would get baptized. It was leaking, pour some more in there. And sometimes great numbers of them including some of the officers wanted to be baptized. It was something they felt, I think about, if they were baptized and if they went to communion then the Japanese did allow for awhile, not always, allow wine to come in. Some of the chaplains still had some of the little cups or the larger cup and the other things for communion and out of the mess hall came diced bread and so forth. There were men that were to pour the wine behind the screen and then it would be brought out and one day somebody found them taking a little nip back there,

you know, and getting a little hilarious, watering it, and sending it out to the others [laughs]. Well, you have to realize that was a great temptation.

Mark: Uh hum, I'm sure.

Norquist: I don't think they ever got into any big trouble for it.

Mark: So, where there many Jewish people in the camp?

Norquist: Yes.

Mark: I assume there were Catholics in the camp.

Norquist: Yeah, because, partly because ours was a medical outfit there were Jewish doctors. Magnificent people.

Mark: Doctor Weinstein wasn't it?

Norquist: Weinstein was my boss for awhile. Wonderful man.

Mark: You left his memoir here. I haven't read it. "Hardwire Surgeon."

Norquist: You have it?

Mark: Oh, yeah. Ralph Pope gave it to us actually.

Norquist: I read it once but somebody else had it. I don't have a copy but I'll come over and read that someday. I'd like to take notes off it. But there's, yeah, they were at the head of the university, you might say. Jews have suffered through their history. It may be that it's even entered their genes. And some of us would go to the Jewish service which is held on Fridays and there was no rabbi but a cantor was bold enough to take over the rabbi's place and would lead, sing the beautiful chants that come out of the suffering of the Jewish people which expresses pain and sorrow and anguish. And you know those songs helped us perhaps more than any little ditty you could sing with a jolly tune. It expressed what we were feeling. The same thing was true of the music that the, there was a choir on the other side in the big camp and a choir on our side. The singing helped a lot. One man said he had given up hope and we came around singing Christmas carols. I think it was the first or second Christmas. We had four Christmases I think in there. And he said he had given up hope and he heard those Christmas carols and he took hope and felt he could live.

Mark: It does sound very ecumenical. As I'm sure you are aware, religious denominations can sometimes squabble. And yet you attended the Jewish ceremonies?

Norquist: Oh, yeah. And the Catholic, too. Sure.

Mark: That's very interesting. As for you personally, did this help you and your career choice shall we say?

Norquist: Yeah.

Mark: In what ways? I was wondering if you could just describe the thought processes.

Norquist: Well, I'll be honest with you. For one thing, existentially it helped me to have sermon material for people who I knew were suffering. You take any church or any group of people, there's some people that are suffering this or that or the other thing. And my telling this has been of help to people. And then, well, professionally, I never tried to climb the ladder in the Presbyterian church as far as that goes, but I think that I probably, my name maybe made it to the top of the heap in going to a church partly because I had been a prisoner of war and they said, "This guy, we'd like to have him." I think that happened. It may be that people have even been maybe a little tolerant of me in terms of my idiosyncrasies because they maybe have said, "Well, you know, if you went through all that maybe you'd be a little bit that way too." I am moody, you know. I think that's part of it, too. Yeah. And still a vestige of that faith left in me that I developed in that period which is say the cynic unknown of my existence. It helped me to bear each day, to wake up in the morning and thank God for the night, and for life, and for hope of going home, and to go to bed with the assurance of an evening prayer. I never became fanatic religious though, or very narrow religious. Some people that are very religious are obnoxiously narrow. I never became that way.

Mark: Hmm. Interesting.

Norquist: I even heard about the seminary I went to when I was in prison camp. A man who had graduated there.

Mark: Princeton?

Norquist: Yeah.

Mark: Yeah. That's right, you did mention that.

Norquist: But I didn't go around talking about religion all the time or anything. My friends and I talked about many things—food, and food, and food, and our families.

Mark: And food.

Norquist: And food, yes [laughs].

Mark: It was obviously a great comfort to you and many others.

Norquist: Yeah. Oh, yes. It was, and I do think that there is the grace of life which can show up where people suffer together and the camaraderie that becomes lasting. I see my old friends and I love them. I think that part of the meanness of our time is that a good many people have become well-off and they forget about maybe how their parents and their grandparents had it and they can be so intolerant of the poor, as if being poor is a great disease. And I see this in the one wing of the Republican party, especially. This sort of social cleavage can lead to great, great unrest in the future, and even great suffering. I think that if it develops much farther in that direction, of the rich and the poor, it's going to bode for some great troubles in America.

Mark: I tend to agree with that. Uhm, I'd like to move on to the liberation and some of the post-war experiences but is there, at this point I want to pause for a second and ask you if there's anything else you'd like to comment on as far as camp life is concerned.

Norquist: Oh, I could tell about funny things that happened. I could tell --

Mark: Sure. Give me a couple.

Norquist: Oh, like, two of our people would get cabin fever so they would argue vociferously upon things that didn't amount to a hill of beans. Is the Mississippi River a separate river from the Missouri? Is the Missouri separate? Are they one river system? And two men were talking on that and arguing so badly that they began to hit each other. And they were both so weak that they couldn't really hurt each other. I thought, in a strange way, that that was funny.

Mark: That's more of that dark humor.

Norquist: Yeah, oh, yeah. And then we had lots of humor about the Japanese. There was this story about the Filipino that had a bolo knife that was very sharp. And a Japanese soldier came along and didn't see him and he took his bolo knife and sliced him through the neck and the Japanese said, "Ha, ha. You didn't even hit me." And the Filipino said, "Oh, yeah? Try to move your head." Well, that's more of the same I guess. There was humor that showed up in, I wish I could, well, you can look it up where they're talking, arguing about food. There's one episode there. Do you remember that? Where they're arguing over whether they should have lugao which is thin gruel of rice, watery you know, but it looks like a bigger quantity or a small amount of dry rice. And the argument goes on and on and on. It finally peters out with

one man saying, "Let's cut out all this talk. First thing you know Lieutenant Goldberg's going to get pissed off at us and he'll cut our rations." He was the mess officer. I mean, that's funny to me.

Mark: You think this, you think the humor also was kind of a sustaining thing. Or the arguments for that matter.

Norquist: Oh, sure. Oh, yes. Right. Yeah. Yeah, that's true.

Mark: How much tape do we have left on this side? Awhile yet. We'll have to go get another one.

Norquist: Oh, it's only 1:00. It felt like it was 4:00 already.

Mark: So we can move on to the liberation then. You were in northern Japan.

Norquist: Right.

Mark: Which you started to describe as a very beautiful place. If you can go back to your description.

Norquist: Great, coniferous pine trees everywhere. There was a river that coursed down this rocky path. A Japanese soldier, when peace had come, took some of us on a detail back for some errand and he showed us a cave and we went into it and we could walk far back with water coming out through it. Rocky, little Japanese temples, small, miniature temples around. Small town that had a lovely schoolhouse made of brick. I got to carry some materials down to them one time. Sometimes we were sent on details to go out and do things. Saw all the little children sitting neatly unhurt. No war had reached them. All dressed in the same uniform and babbling as children would do, joyously, rushing out to play in the playground. Nice area. Great hills and they would chop trees and they'd tumble down in the area where trees had been tumbling down for a long time. Some were sent afloat down the river. Some were put on railroad trains to be carried away. Even our area was a well-built building, nice wash facilities. Food was not great when we came there but toward the end it got so we couldn't even eat it all.

Mark: I was going to ask you this question earlier. As you indicated, the food seemed to have gotten better once you got to Japan and even after 1943.

Norquist: Yeah. It was standardized. It had some balance. You had vegetable, you had a little maybe a tiny piece of fish, a little bit of fowl or of pork.

Mark: And yet I get the impression that your weight really hadn't gone up considerably.

Norquist: It went up.

Mark: It did go up?

Norquist: Oh, way toward the end.

Mark: At the very end.

Norquist: At the very end, yeah. Not in the Philippines, even when I was up, it went down a short period for some reason or other, I don't know, but I was down so that I looked like a skeleton. Part of the time I had a round belly, by the way. And thick ankles.

Mark: From malnourishment.

Norquist: Yeah. And ulcers. In the Philippines. And there was more medicine available, too. The Japanese, well, in any period of their existence in this century, they would have been ahead of the Philippines on things like that I think. And then the end came. Well, first of all, there were some air raids and they did hit our factory. After the one shift had gotten away and the other shift was coming on, it was as if they knew that, and the men hadn't gotten to their machines yet. They were outside. And hit the factory. And then they began to take us up into a ravine when the planes would come over and we'd just lie there in this ravine and then one day the American lieutenant which was our ranking man, asked me if I could play the Star Spangled Banner. I said, "I've been waiting all these years to that." And he said, "Can you play 'God Save the King'?" I said, "Of course. It's the same as our 'America'" although the British put a little different harmony to it but it's basically the same. So we were all called out on the parade ground and the Japanese major said, I may not have every word right but pretty close, "Gentlemen, the day has at last arrived for which we have waited all these years. You are now free men." and the sergeant major stood up and said, "Hip, hip, hooray." That went three times. And then there were speeches that told us what was likely to happen, that we would probably be taken down to the coast and we may have to wait some days, and this and that, and we were told that we should probably not go into the village because there may be some bad feelings and things could happen. But it wasn't long before we were in the village. I went to see one of the work bosses who had been especially friendly to us. Incidentally, he later became the manager of the plant. The manager of the plant before wasn't all that bad but he could be rough and he was taken away after. Only one man was left that had been a little bit rough and the men took turns watching him and making him march back and forth and broke his sword.

Mark: Now, you didn't have any weapons did you?

Norquist: No. Not there.

Mark: So you have no weapons and you go into the Japanese village.

Norquist: Yeah, just went down there. You'd have thought that there'd never been a war. Without exception, they were kindly to everybody. Talked in Pidgin English. We knew little Japanese. And this man, particular man, his wife was there. She's still alive. I've had a little correspondence with her. I learned about where she was through a Japanese friend that looked her up. So she gave us, me, a nice meal. And there was a little girl—I found out later it wasn't their child—but gave me a little doll that I carried. I gave it away when I got back. And so that was around the 20th, 22nd was when we were freed inside the camp and the Japanese sergeant brought us our food and laid it out. We finally got to go down the coast the 13th of September and were soon aboard, some of us went aboard a hospital ship and others—I had some lingering problems whereby I went on the ship—and others went down to Tokyo, Yokohama and everything, were taken out on, I suppose, troop transports. Some were flown back even. My own brother was in Yokohama harbor when I was there on this hospital ship. I went down, I wanted to see the whole ship because I had, even when I was railroad cook I'd go down into the harbors and look at ships and see their machinery and ask them questions about where they went and everything. So I went down to the galley. Took my friend Hill along with me, he was still with me, and others, and one of them said—he was a big black guy—he said, “You boys like a Coke?” I says, “Oh, sure. I haven't had one in years.” so he handed it to us and I wrote to the Coca Cola Company and told them about it and they sent me \$25 and they printed it in their national paper [laughs].

Mark: This was in the '40s sometime?

Norquist: Oh, well, this was after the war. Yeah, this would have been probably about the 23rd or 24th of September.

Mark: Oh, I mean when this appeared in the Coke --

Norquist: Oh, yeah. That was after I got back I wrote. I came home. My mother had died which was a terrible blow. As you know from reading the diary my thoughts were of her a great deal. Her brothers were alive. Father was not too well and glad to see me. I was glad to see him.

Mark: Good to be back, huh?

Norquist: Yeah.

Mark: Uhm, I just wanted to briefly touch on the atomic bomb.

Norquist: Yeah, we heard about it.

Mark: Yeah. You heard about it much, much later. And I was interested in your reaction.

Norquist: Well, it's written in there.

Mark: Yeah. No, I was interested. It's not, it's what you might call revisionist today, in a sense.

Norquist: Yeah and I was thinking of that coming here. And I was thinking --

Mark: [TALK OVER EACH OTHER] -- called revisionist _____.

Norquist: Yeah. The people in the military, VFW, Legion, some other organizations, tend to think that the American soldier or airman or whatever he is, the noble one, the good one and nothing we can do can be really wrong because it's part of our mission. We do a job, you know, as the saying goes. And that's true. But not all history should be looked at from that viewpoint. History should take into account if it's written years later especially to take into account the impact of a war upon every region, whether on one side or another or neutral. What happened to the world if you're writing world history. Of necessity, it's not that they're revising history necessarily, it's their telling another aspect of history. And it's hard for people on either side to take a narrow view to see that. But I told you I see about seven different things on any subject which would be true there. I can understand, my friends say that it helped to end the war. Possibly it did. Some historians say "no," they were about to do it anyway but we couldn't be sure. It may have even been far better for the Japanese that it came there. And I see that side. I feel the patriotism of people and share it that, you know, we have a great country and we shouldn't demean it needlessly. But if you're writing history then you've got to admit that this was a pretty horrendous thing. But so is much else that goes on in war. No worse than what happened in Tokyo, or to Dresden for example, or to Coventry in England. So that's, I'm saddled with who I am and I can, it's not that I'm duplicitous and will speak to one person one way and one the other.

Mark: No, no.

Norquist: But I put things in context.

Mark: I'm interested in the reaction of others around you, at the time.

Norquist: Oh, lots of them felt the way I did. That we were glad it had come because we would get out. Again, part of my brain said that. And the other half felt horror over the scope of it and implicit in that was the question as to what

would happen in the future if this became widespread. There are people that are going to be marching through Milwaukee, they're going to go from where the atomic experiment first was tested out in --

Mark: Chicago.

Norquist: -- Chicago and they're going to go all the way up to the ELF thing which sends out information to submarines that have the Trident missile.

Mark: I hadn't heard of this actually.

Norquist: It will be coming through Milwaukee. They could be thought of as being crazy people. They could be thought of as being even possibly subversive, from one viewpoint. From the other viewpoint, given the horrendous scope of devastation that the atomic bomb can do now which is far above what was done at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, well, might we listen to these people as they protest against the existence of atomic arms. The whole world, part of my brain says, must be atom-free. You talk about smoke-free environment in restaurants and things; this is trivial, this is nothing. The whole future of the planet is involved in this thing. So maybe for fairness should listen to the two sides—those that say, well, it may be

[END TAPE 1, SIDE B]

Norquist: Yeah.

Mark: No, I could agree with that. Okay. Tape number two here. The prisoners of war when they come back to their homes, often suffer from more medical and psychological conditions than perhaps other veterans do. I was wondering if you could perhaps describe some of the problems, if any, you had readjusting back to civilian life.

Norquist: I don't think I was aware, I didn't really self-evaluate myself. I remember in our country, oh, some ten years ago, young people in particular were looking at their navels and wondering why this and what did my parents do and all this and that, and I don't feel that way. I can look at the past and I can, hopefully, look for the future and I can live only in the present. I don't know that I, I've had physical aftereffects with my skin in particular because of the sun. I've had other, like hypertension which may have come out of it. Things like that. As far as, it has bent my thinking, I tend to take the side of underdogs and that's true to the present day. So I think it has shaped me in that way. And sometimes I've been despised by some people because I would befriend people that were in prison and things like that. I hate the imprisonment of people whether they're prisoners of conscience, or of war, or of any kind of imprisonment. I have given money, what little I've gotten in this life, to groups that minister to prisons, and Amnesty International, the like of that. I

don't know. I think in some ways it's made me stronger. I live in a tremendous gratitude all the time, to be alive, and in a happiness with my family, and so forth. I get impatient sometimes with the pettiness of people. I get very impatient. Even in church you find people that, well, you know, evangelism is fine but let's not bring in people that will cause trouble in the church, let's not rock the boat, let's not bring in people, you know, black people and so forth. I get impatient with this sort of thinking and this gets me—in fact, I worked in this movement for awhile and was even arrested, I'm proud to say, down in --

Mark: In Milwaukee.

Norquist: Yeah. Selma, Alabama. I was a state, head of the state organization for civil rights in our denomination in Illinois when I was there. I get upset with the pettiness of some of the leaders in the church, of the church with a very narrow perspective, and now and then I'm vocal on that. I don't think I make friends doing that. I have had, I suppose I've had some things that have been bad coming out of it. I think right now, a few periods of my life when I was facing a lot of tension and I had short time breakdown and I wasn't myself. I remember telling, I was an assistant pastor in the church and I told the pastor to go to hell one day. I felt with good cause. I still feel good about it in a way. But, you know, that was a breakdown of sorts and a counselor needed to see me, I needed to see him, and he helped me and I was back on my feet, I bounced up again.

Mark: But these sorts of --

Norquist: I can get dreams in the night that are bad.

Mark: You still to this day?

Norquist: Yeah. I had one place where I dreamed that the Japanese were beating me, which happened, not once but a number of times, and sometimes with a stick. In the dream I began fighting and my wife was the one that got it; I hit her hard. Other men have had things like that. Of course some of them have also a great guilt feeling. They were in combat and they would see these young boys on the opposite side and shoot them and they saw what they were doing. They weren't brought up that way. To this day they have guilt out of it. They need to express it, too. There's a Dr. Bernstein that has a support group and the wives are in on that support group, too, to tell them how they can deal with them. But I just feel lucky and I feel happy and I feel I've had a good shake of life. I've had my troubles and I've had great joys and I'll settle for it. If there's anything more like seeing the new, well, my fiftieth wedding anniversary coming up and maybe even living to see the new century come in five years from now. That's, I'm living for that. Anything I get beyond that,

well, that really would be strawberries on top of the whipped cream 'cause I feel very lucky.

Mark: A couple of real brief things.

Norquist: Some of the POWs feel that way.

Mark: The strawberry on top of the whipped cream?

Norquist: Well, I mean they feel lucky in life. Lucky to be alive and all.

Mark: I see. As far as the GI Bill is concerned, there were numerous --

Norquist: I benefited from it.

Mark: Yeah, I was going to ask. Did it, Princeton I'm sure, was not cheap. Although I must say I don't know.

Norquist: The seminary is not as expensive as the university. Subsidized by the church.

Mark: Did the GI Bill cover your educational expenses?

Norquist: Well, it gave me, I think, \$80 a month. And I couldn't live on that. My wife worked while I was at Princeton. I worked in a dental office at night sometimes, straightening out, you know, they would just throw things in piles and then they'd want everything recorded and all this and that and I did that for awhile. I did, as I moved along, I got to serve in little churches and I'd go out—in one case, I went out to a church on the coast. It was a little church. I think it was at Absecon, New Jersey if I'm not mistaken. It cost me \$8 to go there by the train and the man in charge there would hand be, solemnly, a five dollar bill every time I went there but I felt the experience was worth it.

Mark: Now, you went to school in Sweden as well.

Norquist: Yeah, 'cause I know Swedish. I don't know it, I'm not fluent but they were tolerant with me and I learned a good deal while I was there. One year. Luenden (sp??), Sweden. It's the second largest university.

Mark: Now, was that covered by the GI Bill?

Norquist: Yeah, yeah it was.

Mark: There were a lot of other sort of benefits, too. Home loan provisions. Did you ever get to use those sorts of things?

Norquist: I didn't use the, I should have. I owned a home at one point in my ministry and I went out and borrowed on the market. I've never availed myself to much of anything. I do think that some veteran's groups get grabby. Forgive me, brothers and sisters.

Mark: Now, this gets to my last line of questioning anyway, and that involves veteran's organizations. Maybe we could just start there. In the first few years after the war did you join any groups?

Norquist: Yeah. I joined the American Legion. I had good years in that. I was department chaplain in Illinois for five years in a row. And I've belonged to the VFW, and I belong to the two ex-prisoner of war organizations. One is the Prisoner of War in America which has one chapter in Milwaukee and another one in West Bend that I go to. I've found it good comradeship to be with these people but I don't always agree with their national policies. Some are pretty narrow.

Mark: But that doesn't keep you out of the organization necessarily.

Norquist: No, no, no. I can believe in the defense of America. Strongly. I do think that sometimes the people that make money off it try to make it a lot more beneficial to them than they probably deserve but I believe in the defense of America. I believe in this country. We make some mistakes but we love the country. And part of our criticism is because we love the country when all is said and done. I don't know if that answers your question.

Mark: Yeah, I think it does. That's about it. Is there anything you'd like to add? Anything you think I've missed, forgotten?

Norquist: Well, I could go on for twelve more hours and not cover it all. I've never done that but I could.

Mark: Yeah. Well, I thank you.

Norquist: But everybody has a story. I mean these fellas that were shot down from the air, you know, over Germany. The fellas that were capture in the Battle of the Bulge, the people that were on ships that were hit with kamikaze attacks, the ones that were on ships that went to the bottom and they managed to get off and float on a piece of wood for awhile and were rescued. These are among my friends. Prisoners of war, too.

Mark: Well, we try to get them in here as often as we can. In fact, you're number 80 I think if I remember correctly.

Norquist: Is that right? Oh my gracious. Yeah.

Mark: So, thanks for coming in. I appreciate it.

Norquist: It's all right, Mark.

[End of Interview]