

Interview No. 23 S.E. Asia History
June 14, 1977 Dick Nesbit and Alden Jones.

Jones

This is interview #23 for the Southeast history writeup. Today is June 14, 1977. We're here at Longview. In the room with me is Dick Nesbit. I'm Alden Jones, and we're going to talk about Southeast Asia and the activities over there. Dick, what's your present job and responsibility here at Longview?

Nesbit

Logging superintendent, North District.

Jones

Okay. Do you happen to remember how you first got involved in the Southeast Asia activities? How it came about? What happened?

Nesbit

Well, my first involvement was, I guess, when Bryce Webster came out to 19 Mile one day in January of '74 and asked me, "How would you like to go to Southeast Asia, to Borneo?" And I said, "Well, I've got nothing against it, but I'd have to think about it overnight." And he said, "Fine. Let me know in the morning", which I did. I agreed that I would go, although that was the end of it.

Jones

In what way?

Nesbit

In the way that that's all I heard from then on until probably in the first part of May, he came back again and said they wanted to talk to me in Tacoma about going to the Far East, and also indicated Borneo, in the Kennedy Bay operation. I went to Tacoma, talked to Harry Morgan, Jim...

Jones

Church?

Nesbit

No. The personnel fellow. He's no longer with, in raw materials now. Jim Kipling?

Jones

Kepner?

Nesbit

Kepner, Jim Kepner. We went ahead and got fixed up and got a physical, applied for a passport to Borneo and that was kind of the end of it, again, until one Saturday morning I got a telephone call and he says, "We'd like you to be at

the Seattle airport on Sunday morning. You're on your way to the Far East." The Far East, by this time, meaning the Philippines.

Jones

This was to be the following morning, from Saturday to Sunday? That was a quick decision.

Nesbit

Quick decision.

Jones

Okay. You went by yourself, did you?

Nesbit

Yes. I went by myself at that time to Milbuk in the Philippines, which was approximately the 10th of May, and my wife and three children followed me. Approximately the 16th of June, they arrived in Milbuk.

Jones

This was about a month later?

Nesbit

Right.

Jones

Was this in 1974?

Nesbit

1974, right.

Jones

Okay. How did things work out at Milbuk for the family?

Nesbit

For the family, they worked out beautiful. My wife and children settled right in. They immediately became part of the community. The Philippine people were very nice to them. It's the first time the Philippine people in that area had had teenage children amongst them. It was quite interested in the ways of the teenagers in this country and it struck off a beautiful relationship.

Jones

That's great. I'm glad to hear about that. Now, were they able to go to school there in Milbuk?

Nesbit

It was summertime, their summer here and they could have, yes, gone to school. The school was, it was in progress at Milbuk but they did not attend the schools.

Jones

And how long did the family stay over there?

Nesbit

Approximately - about the 20th or 23rd of August.

Jones

The same year?

Nesbit

Yes.

Jones

Okay. And did all of you return then?

Nesbit

No. At that time the family returned without me and, No. 1, we had the problem at Milbuk at the time and the insurgents, and so it was my decision that I would send my family out. They were scheduled to leave in six more days anyhow, to return to the States for school for the children, and I decided that they should go a little quicker.

Jones

Sure thing. Well, can we have your story of the rebel difficulty, Dick?

Nesbit

The dates - all of them will be probably more accurate on the other tapes than any - I can't quite remember the dates but the first ambush happened on the Kraan, at Kilometer 25. We were working out in that area, extending the roads. We had been working out in that area approximately 15 days, rebuilding the existing roads and extending the roads. We had just got started probably two days into the new construction and the first ambush came on us that morning. And the date, I just can't recall, right now.

Jones

Had there been any previous difficulty or any kind of warnings of this kind of problem, troubles?

Nesbit

Well, I guess they had in previous time, but not to this seriousness but the men had been uneasy about going to the Kraan. And I had been going to the Kraan with them and they felt a lot easier when I went with them, and so every morning I went out ahead of the crew bus, led them out and we worked there. Yes, they could hear the gongs down in the jungle and the military signs and Manobo signs. They would tell them that they were rebel-type people in the area and this sort of thing.

Jones

You used a name to describe the area you went into. Kraan?

Nesbit
Kraan.

Jones
Was that the name of a river?

Nesbit
The Kraan River, yes.

Jones
Okay. And then what was it happened that first morning of the ambush?

Nesbit
Well, the first morning they ambushed, it happened in the morning, of course. That morning I started out ahead of the crew bus as normal. The log coordinator from Manila had come down the day before, and I was about 2 kilometers out of camp when they came and caught up with us and said that the log coordinator, Rogie Patricio, wanted to go to Wasag. It was a log yard and so I turned around and we went to Wasag. The ambush happened first thing in the morning, I'd say approximately 8:00 in the morning, and they didn't get the word about it until sometime in the afternoon, that they had an ambush. I was at Langeliend by then and we checked our summer storms, it had caused some road damage - I got stuck behind some road damage and we got back into the Milbuk compound at approximately 5:00 p.m., about the same time that the soldiers and what-have-you came back in. Some of our people survived the ambush.

Jones
What had actually happened during the ambush, Dick?

Nesbit
I guess I don't quite follow the question.

Jones
How do you describe the ambush? What occurred?

Nesbit
Well, an ambush - they were waiting for our crew bus along the road, at Kilometer 25. When the crew bus was coming up to this corner, which was a very sharp corner, they just started firing upon the crew bus. There was 21 people killed. There were two survivors. The crew bus driver was a survivor, a fellow by the name of Divogi. He had 14 bullet holes in him.

Jones
He wasn't the other survivor, was he?

Nesbit

No. The other survivor was Brutus Bajada, an engineer.

Jones

I remember him.

Nesbit

He also had 15 bullet holes in him. And there was approximately, I would say, I never counted them but I would say probably between 300 and 400 bullet holes in the crew bus.

Jones

Then how did word get back to camp?

Nesbit

Word got back to the camp from the Manobos saying there had been an ambush on the Kraan Line.

Jones

They walked into camp with the information?

Nesbit

Yes.

Jones

And then the security force went out to . . .

Nesbit

Yes. We had this small PC organization there and a small army organization and part of my company. On getting back to the compound they went out with a dump truck and arms, and picked up the survivors and the deceased.

Jones

There was no evidence of the rebels?

Nesbit

No. the rebels at that time were gone.

Jones

They had moved out?

Nesbit

They had moved out.

Jones

What then was it necessary for you to do at the operation?

Nesbit

Well, at that time it was pretty necessary for me to make a few decisions. I was the only white man there. I had my family with me and so my decision at that time was that we had to do something, so I met with the army lieutenant - I can't think of his name right now. Then we decided that we

should set up some sort of defense - a warning defense. Because the people of the Milbuk and Wasag and San Roche area were quite upset and scared the daylights, that the rebels had come in that close.

And so we sat down and set up outposts to kind of give us some sense of security, I guess. Then everything was quiet probably for two days and then the rebels did mount the ridge above the airport and crept into the tidewater in front of the compound, then they'd fire shots up on the...

Jones

Through the compound, right there at Milbuk.

Nesbit

Right there at Milbuk. At that time, it went on about two days, I decided that my wife and children should leave, so I flew them out to Manila and I stayed there and we kind of got a little more organized. I could see things that we had to do, that had to be done if we were going to stay in even a holding position because they were moving in closer. Our runners or Manobos - we called them our runners - they'd bring messages and information where they were and so we went into a kind of a holding position.

And I could see I had to keep the people busy, there was no place for them to go. It was Moslem country both ways and they couldn't go by water. The rebels would slip into the mangroves just below the village up from Milbuk up north and fire on us to some extent, so the next morning at low tide, we went out with saws and we fell them, so they couldn't slip in there, so we could park our dump trucks and our log trucks so that the lights were shining out on the water. And we also took some of the logs and built a drift boom out off the edge of the reef so - which went quite well. We built that at low tide, took the logs out and laid them on the reef, tied them down and when the tide came, it floated the logs. They came in after dark, and that particular night the rebels tried to come in by boat and ran into our drift boom with their boats and so the army and the PC were able to score quite heavily.

Jones

Now these trees, the mangrove, that you cut, which direction were they, if you were standing at the guest house, looking out to the ocean?

Nesbit

To your right.

Jones

To your right. It was kind of a point with a lot of trees up there.

Nesbit
Towards Kampong.

Jones
Right. And when the tide was in, the water came in among these and when it was out, why, there was a little peninsula there. That's getting close enough.

Nesbit
You also are aware of the lighthouse that was there? We reactivated the old lighthouse.

Jones
Let's see . . .

Nesbit
Sets just off the guesthouse.

Jones
Yes. Right.

Nesbit
And we reactivated that and we went to work and cleaned the jungle off to the ridge behind the compound and cleaned part of the jungle off towards the ridge beyond the airport. We kind of went into a holding position at that time and I never thought too much about it but the - I know the people were scared. They were scared of...

Jones
Infiltration.

Nesbit
Infiltration. So we finally set up a little system. We kind of tagged everybody, so that they could be identified. But basically just keeping the people busy, I think, was the biggest problem because if you've never seen fear you certainly could have seen it during the siege.

Jones
They were really scared to death?

Nesbit
That's right. And nowhere to go. We went to General Santos and tried to get help from the Philippine government. And we - of course, at that time every municipality in Mindanao was having trouble, the same kind of trouble, and they finally went on a priority basis, I guess. The barrio municipality mayor, Ali Druz, was a Moslem. He wouldn't go to General Santos, I didn't expect him to go to General Santos and so I went to General Santos and represented Weyerhaeuser Co. and the Philippine people, and presented my piece to the General and to the governor, which was Colonel Siengco, and when I got done, the question was posed to me that if we were under all-out attack at Milbuk, how long

could we survive? And I gave him an answer of 48 hours at the maximum with the few arms we had. We had made a few homemade shotguns and we made a few bolos, made a few spears and that was the position we were in, so we went back and they kept cutting our supply lines. Our supplies were very low. Our fishermen couldn't go fishing. Our fishermen would go fishing at night and that was the end - sometimes we found their boat and that was it.

Jones
No fishermen?

Nesbit
No fishermen. They just didn't come back. Then they came into our airfield.

Jones
They finally took that over?

Nesbit
Yes. And then they mounted an all-out - I forget what day it was - an all-out attack on Milbuk. I was in communication with Andy Macs in Manila, periodically, and I guess Governor Siengco had to take me at my word and we were down - my last conversation with Mr. Macs was that we were right down to where we would be throwing rocks at them in 20 minutes, when two army helicopters arrived and bailed us out.

Jones
With soldiers?

Nesbit
With soldiers and some ammunition and...

Jones
Twenty minutes to go?

Nesbit
Twenty minutes to go.

Jones
Where'd they come from? Davao?

Nesbit
They came from Lebuk.

Jones
Where had you gone to meet with the people you spoke of?

Nesbit
General Santos.

Jones
Yes. Where had you gone to meet him? At Lebuk? Had you left camp when you . . .

Nesbit

Yes. I went down to General Santos, which was a community south of Milbuk.

Jones

Yes. Yes. That was a capital of some kind of a district, wasn't it?

Nesbit

Right. I was pretty much up on the government over there. The army came in, I met again with Colonel Siengco or Governor Siengco. We built a good rapport with him. I took it upon myself to make the decision that Weyerhaeuser Co. wanted to stay in the Philippines. That they wanted to log in the Philippines. That they had no intention of leaving the Philippines or being forced out of the Philippines and with those conversations with Governor Siengco, he decided then that Weyerhaeuser Co. in Milbuk was top priority and that he would clean up the area, drive the insurgents back and... The Philippine people, themselves, also wanted Weyerhaeuser Co. to stay.

Jones

Okay. And did he actually follow through on that?

Nesbit

He followed up, yes. They had a military operation there that consisted of four helicopters, a C47, three other small planes - a Cessna, or a Yankee Commander, a Cessna 150, I believe it was, five warships and they also brought five divisions of army personnel. They even mounted an operation from the north, to the region in north - no, it would be to the west. When you're looking out to the ocean from the guest house, you're looking east, then?

Jones

No, you're looking west, or quartering from the west.

Nesbit

Quartering from the west. And when you're looking north, you're looking to your right.

Jones

To the right. I see. This would be around toward, say, northwesterly.

Nesbit

Quartering from the north. The military was to the south. Okay and this was kind of the base from which they worked?

Jones

They did their military action? I see. And what was the result of the action?

Nesbit

The result of the action was that we could resume operations. We did try to resume operations although we had been out of the woods for over a month and we went out to just kind of look around. We had an agreement with Mayor Druz that he would go with us.

In fact, I think I'm out of sequence. I think the second ambush may have been a part of the operation.

Jones

Then there had been a second ambush?

Nesbit

There was a second ambush. Andy Macs and I met with Mayor Druz and _____ from the south and _____ and _____ from the north and we got together and we had a tentative agreement that when we'd go to the ridge everything was going to be safe and what-have-you and we went to Palimbong one morning. We took our top construction people, that I could get to go. Arturo Labaiho, Quinko and some tractor operators and what-have-you, that would go to the woods. And in good faith the Moslem people would go with us and Mayor Druz went with us and his head police officer and the whole works. So up to the woods we went.

I was quite uneasy about it. I told Andy Macs that I was uneasy about it. I never said nothing to Mayor Druz and I told Arturo Labaiho and Quinko that I just kind of had a feeling that things weren't quite right, that I thought that we should leave, not on a predetermined schedule like we had set, that we ought to set that schedule ahead, which we did, without saying anything to the Moslem people, Mayor Druz or anybody. When we came in, Mr. Macs and I came in ahead of the crews. We were by ourselves. I drove a little faster, I guess, I don't know what. But when the crews came through Sinangcangan, in a very short time after we drove back into camp, they also were setting up another ambush in the old rice mill, which didn't quite materialize. They weren't ready for us. And we lost some people, also in that ambush. One was our log yard foreman, _____ Ramchand. Melicio Bahada was wounded, our engineer.

Jones

Was he the same one that had been in the first ambush?

Nesbit

No, that was Brutus, his brother.

Jones

His brother?

Nesbit

Right. And Melicio also was wounded. We lost three vehicles. They were shot up pretty bad. And it was also in this one that we got word that - I wish I could think of the name of the Lieutenant that commanded our Cessna 180 when they had backed off away from the airport. I think I'm out of sequence because I know that this Lieutenant commanded the Cessna 180 and also Captain Flores, our pilot. And they flew around the bend to Sinangcangan with the idea that they would - the Lieutenant was going to spray from the airplane and, in the process, Captain Flores received a bullet wound in the foot and was just able to return to the airport and land before he passed out and also Virgilio Heini was with him and I don't know why Virgilio was with them. If you've seen anybody that was scared, now Virgilio was scared. And he had every right to be.

But that kind of upset everybody. And I know that more people came into the compound. At one time I figured we had approximately between 6-7,000 people in that area. Manobos came out of the jungle and the Manobos also fought the insurgents and they came in. I allowed them to come in. There was noplacelse else for them to go.

Jones

Six to seven thousand people would make quite a congregation.

Nesbit

Yes, it did. Andy and I tried to make plans to evacuate some of them but we couldn't put anything together on that. The reason was, there was noplacelse for them to go. It was quite a mess all the way around.

Jones

However, a lot of things happened there. Was it your recollection that the two ambushes occurred before the military came to your assistance?

Nesbit

Right. And I'm sure the tapes in Tacoma are a lot more accurate.

Jones

All right. Okay.

Nesbit

I had some other - I made one mistake. I wish now that I had kept a day-to-day journal, which I didn't keep. I didn't have time to keep it.

Jones

You were pretty busy.

Nesbit

I was busier than - 24 hours a day.

Jones

Well, did anyone else perhaps keep a journal or a diary?

Nesbit

Nobody that I know of unless it would be one of the Filipinos. I was the only, of course, American there, at times. Mr. Macs came in periodically but really nobody wanted to come in. I didn't feel like I wanted to leave. I felt that my being there gave the people some sense of security and I also didn't want to represent Weyerhaeuser Co. as a company that would walk off and forget about the people.

Jones

Looks like it kind of put you on the spot. But, of course, I'm sure you made the right decision, Dick. Although the airport was under fire from time to time and was even overrun part of the time, you were still able to use it part of the time, is that right?

Nesbit

Part of the time. There was a three-day period or longer. I guess it was about a five-week period that the airport was impossible. We took veneers out of the veneer mill - veneer bundles from the veneer mill - and stacked them in front of the hangars so they couldn't shoot the airplanes up. Then we were kind of at a status quo for awhile. We had a small complement of army and a small complement of PC there. There is some humor in war, I guess.

Jones

Okay, how does that go?

Nesbit

We decided that people were getting pretty hungry around there - we weren't getting any rice, we couldn't get out to get any. We couldn't go fishing because the rebels at night - you could hear them out there in the dark in the boats - and so we took a large pom-boat. And they took it to the shop and kind of armour-plated it and we had a 40-horse Evinrude motor that we put on it which we felt was superior to the rebels'. And we put a .30 caliber machine gun on it, and we had some volunteers who were going out and fish and get some fish for the town. After dark we heard the boat start and disappear off into the darkness and the only person that we found that was not amongst us was a PC captain by the name of Capt. Coletta and he was the only one that escaped. He took our boat and ran off with it.

Jones

That rascal. Did he join the rebels?

Nesbit

No. I heard later that he was someplace around Lebuk. He got through them and went up the coast to Lebuk.

Jones

None of that fishing stuff for him. He was gonna take that boat and escape. That's the way it goes.

Nesbit

I kind of chuckled about that.

Jones

After the army moved in did they take action against the rebels to sort of secure the place?

Nesbit

Oh, yes. They had an operation from Golong-Golong to the south and Langalie to the north and they attacked them and burnt. They burnt their homes, they burnt the farms. They were all Moslems. They destroyed everything that was Moslem and captured some of the rebels and destroyed some of them. Through interrogation and whatever, they really worked them over. I know that so far as me and Mr. Macs, we went - after the operation had been over for a few days, we took a trip and went up to _____. That was a very nice community. Very nice houses and what-have-you. Some of the people there, I assume, had never seen a white man before. They had the women and children in the compound and the men were all gone. Some of the men, I don't know what they'd done with them. Most of the little boys and the men were all gone.

Jones

These were the Moslem men?

Nesbit

Yes.

Jones

I see. They were liquidated, perhaps, then.

Nesbit

Shortly after that - I was over the woods. I came home in November of 1974. The area was secure. We'd reopened the roads. My replacement had shown up at the Milbuk operations and I went to the woods several times every day. I'd shown my replacement at the operation. We got the operation moving again, and I came home. I understand they finished the operation without another incident.

Jones

I see. But those incidents occurred in August, is that right? Then you stayed there another three months after that.

Nesbit

That's right. There was still some trouble up through September, October. There was still some trouble, but we were secured by the army.

Jones

But these were just small incidents?

Nesbit

Small incidents. But I found the Filipinos - I found the people to be good to work with. I found they were good workers. I found the loggers could be good loggers. They had the knowledge that they were on very steep ground. Kind of like our Castle Creek country.

Jones

Kind of hilly, uh?

Nesbit

That's right. They did quite well. We were running 10 yarders and three loading machines. We did quite well production-wise.

Jones

Okay, then. You had a crew that had actually been there for quite some time and they were pretty well established. What was your impression of the hardwood timber, as different from the kind of timber that you were used to here?

Nesbit

Well, I found the jungle fascinating. The timber did surprise me, by the size of the timber.

Jones

Was it bigger than you thought or smaller?

Nesbit

It was larger than I thought. The whole region was bigger than I could ever imagine anything to be. The jungle was denser than anything I could imagine. I think it took much effort to get a log out of the woods and it was just amazing. Then we raised our spar trees. I found the crew quite efficient in rigging trees, in raising trees. I found them quite efficient in falling timber.

Jones

Most of your crews were the native Filipino people, were they?

Nesbit

Yes.

Jones

They have a good reputation in that Southeast Asia country of being good workers and adaptable to different kind of work.

Nesbit

On my part of it, I found the veneer mill quite interesting. I had never been involved in veneer mills. They had a very capable man running that operation - Joe Colendro.

Jones

What was that name again?

Nesbit

Joe Colendro. Joe Colendro.

Jones

Oh, one of the Filipino ... oh, I see. How do you spell that last name?

Nesbit

C, o, l, n - Colendro. I found that he was the superin - the manager. The Filipino people had hard luck, I guess, from the time I landed in Milbuk. We had a fire that burned up half the town of Wasag, and just about burnt the office building.

Jones

Now, where is this town?

Nesbit

Wasag? The one that sat right behind the barrio - right behind the office.

Jones

Next to the barrio?

Nesbit

Right across from the power house.

Jones

Where the big stack was? Now, this isn't the compound area that had the fence around it, with the gate that they closed?

Nesbit

No. That is Milbuk.

Jones

That was Milbuk? That's the old Moslem part of the town. You're referring to the new ...

Nesbit

If I had my map - I had a map of the area. But the old office building sat here and Wasag sat in this area up here. This is the Milbuk area here and this is the San Roche barrio, in this end of town, by the water.

Jones

I have not had them identified in just that way. And where was the school now?

Nesbit

The school was over inside the compound.

Jones

Oh, in the opposite direction? Yes, okay, all right. All right, fine. Which part of it was it that burned, now?

Nesbit

Juarez. The part right behind, right across from the power house and behind the office.

Jones

Behind the office and next to the Moslem part of it? Milbuk?

Nesbit

Next to San Roche. And I know I - that was the sixth night, I believe, that I was there and Charlene, the cook at the guest house, woke me up and said that the town was burning and this was approximately about 12 o'clock at night. I went over there - I could see the flames from the guest house - I ran over there and the people, of course, were excited and were running everywhere. Of course, there was no fire protection whatsoever. We had a D7 tractor sitting there fortunately. I took the D7 tractor, started it. I built a fire trail out of houses, ran through the middle and cut the fire in two, so that it didn't burn the whole works up. That was the first problem that we overcame. Our second problem that we overcame was that we had some extensive rains and they got into flood conditions. It washed out our bridges, close around there. There were two bridges, one at Wahl and one at, I believe, at Senoi.

Jones

These were the bridges back in the hills?

Nesbit

On our main road up the coast.

Jones

Up the coast towards Wasag?

Nesbit

Towards Wasag, yes. Of course, we had to overcome those problems. I found the people very willing. If you'd lead them, they would attack any problem with a lot of enthusiasm. As long as they knew that you were going to be right out there, ahead of them.

Jones

They respected and appreciated leadership and would follow?

Nesbit
Right.

Jones
This is a good report.

Nesbit
I know they said I had more tough luck than even Art Carlisle. Did you know Art Carlisle? He was one of the first...

Jones
I don't know. The name is familiar, but I don't place him at the moment.

Nesbit
He was one of the managers in there, I think, in about 1967.

Jones
I think I did meet him someplace along the way.

Nesbit
They were logging in the Kraan area. They had extensive rains and they didn't get any logs for a long period of time.

Jones
How do we spell that Kraan? Is that spelled with a K?

Nesbit
K-r-a-a-n.

Jones
A-a-n. All right. I remember now. Okay. You said you had more bad luck than he did, huh? You were there six months and I just can't imagine any more bad luck than you did encounter with the insurrectionists and the fire and the washouts.

Nesbit
Yeah, we... The country over there that amazed me - of course, there's the amount of steepness, and also the amount of landslides we had. When we were logging, we had to keep tractors on it at night. Had to keep the slides off the roads until the next morning.

Jones
In order to operate the next day?

Nesbit
In order to operate the next day. It surprised me the way the jungle grows. We were out of the woods approximately six weeks and when we returned the vines had grown clear across the road.

Jones

That's a very interesting comment, Dick. It certainly illustrates how rapidly the vines and the brush do grow in that climate.

Nesbit

That's right.

Jones

Oh, for heaven's sake. Vines clear across the road. When you had gone over there in the first place, had you planned to stay only six months or was that a change?

Nesbit

No. That was the plan. I don't know why that was the plan. Of course, Harry Morgan said when I got back, he just sent me over there for a six-month vacation.

Jones

This is a vacation?

Nesbit

This is a vacation. No, that was the plan. I don't know whether they had run out of people. I know that when I went over there, Lloyd Roberts had been in there.

Jones

I remember Lloyd.

Nesbit

A fellow by the name of Jerry Forth had been there. They were there together. When I went in, I went in by myself. I was the only one there. Which is another quite interesting experience, being there by yourself amongst strangers in a different country.

Jones

That really was a challenge to you, wasn't it?

Nesbit

Oh, yes it was. I found the weather was bearable. I didn't have any trouble handling the weather.

Jones

It's really a fresh, sort of a pleasant place there, I thought. Breezes blowing in off the ocean and the surf right in front of the porch there, spraying water on the house sometimes.

Nesbit

I had the opportunity to meet lots of people. Max Sagrado, for one. I knew him quite well.

Jones

Yes, I knew Max. We did several jobs together over there.

Nesbit

Howard Milan.

Jones

Frank.

Nesbit

Frank Milan.

Jones

Frank Milan. He was at Basilan.

Nesbit

He was at Milbuk.

Jones

Did he move down to Milbuk?

Nesbit

I found him quite interesting. Melicio Bajada.

Jones

How do we spell that first name? I'm trying to get a handle on that. I remember the fellow very well.

Nesbit

Melicio?

Jones

Yes.

Nesbit

It's M-e-l-i-c-i-o, I believe. I don't know. I have some of these names at home. I got some of them at home I could look up.

Jones

All right. Yes, if you might do that, so we could get the name right in our story.

Nesbit

I found the people interesting. I think I can remember them better than some of the people I worked with right here. I became closer to them. Jack Astrada, our foreman. Even Ferdie Jallorina and June Megia. He was the company lawyer that was killed in that ambush that Andy Macs was involved in, on the airplane.

Jones

On the airplane, at Zamboanga?

Nesbit
That hijacking.

Jones
Those were rough times, for sure.

Nesbit
I'm sure that the facts in the papers in Tacoma will clear it up. For my part of it, I went right from Seattle to Tokyo to Manila. From Manila out to Davao, from Davao to Milbuk. There I was and I'd never had any inclinations that I wasn't going to like it and I was completely satisfied. I kind of wondered once before I left what happens if you don't like it. You're a long ways from home.

Jones
What happens, what can you do, if you don't like it?

Nesbit
What can you do if you don't like it? I never saw anything there that even made that thought enter my mind.

Jones
Partly because you were busy, partly because of the emergency, you didn't have the chance to start brooding and worrying about it, I guess, Dick.

Nesbit
That's right.

Jones
Well, golly, I'm sure very few of us can say that we ever crammed as much excitement and emergency into such a short period of time. I'm sure you made a lot of good decisions, necessarily there, but you wouldn't want to do it again, would you?

Nesbit
Well, I think under certain circumstances, I think I would.

Jones
If necessary, you'd take it?

Nesbit
If necessary, I'd take it. Of course, I don't think anybody anticipated quite what was going to happen. There's no way that anyone could anticipate that. However, it was known back in the Philippines that there were insurgents. There were this type of - rebel-type operations in that area. Milbuk more or less kind of sat isolated on a Moslem coast. I don't think that there was that much of an indication.

Although I understood that they had a couple of scares from a distance previously about two years before. I know that the people came to me and asked me why I wasn't leaving, when the trouble started. I told them I didn't see any reason to leave. There was nothing there that I was really scared of. I had all the faith in the world in them. If there came a time to depend on them, I believe I could depend on them, if I had to. I think that's where I got the cooperation from the people that - I understood that before, under any type of situation, that American management had pulled out and left.

Jones

You're confident that you made the right decision to stay by, stand by them, give them a plan to work with? That's good.

Nesbit

It was just interesting to me. I had always wanted to be in a situation where I was by myself and make my own decisions and what-have-you. I had every opportunity.

Jones

I'm sure, Dick, that the fortunate, the happy result-ending was due in a large extent to the plan that you set up for them there.

Nesbit

Well, with the plan I set up, Weyerhaeuser was able to finish the operation there. They got another few years in operation there before its ended.

Jones

It was not until 1976 that they actually closed down.

Nesbit

Yeh, 1976. That was my plan. I was quite thrilled about that. I know that the logging plan that I had scheduled out, I had indicated that by losing our Santa Clara end of it, as a concession, Santa Clara, and by losing the Kraan area to the rebels, we had to get out of there. My logging plan said in 1976, sometime in September or October, the concession would be dead.

Jones

That's about the way it came out.

Nesbit

It's about the way it came out.

Jones

In speaking of losing the Kraan area, after this rebel trouble, you never went back into that area.

Nesbit

We never went back. And, of course, that was Bill Johnson's decision that we wouldn't go back. The way I understand it, I don't know this for a fact, but I understand, through some people, that they did go back in and tried to log a portion of it.

Jones

They felt it was safe, huh?

Nesbit

I understand that when they did go back in there, they had armed guards, helicopters and the whole works. But the timber in the Kraan area - you are probably familiar with the area that they were out on. Of course, the timber that way didn't look as good to me as the timber in the old area.

Jones

It was smaller timber and thinner stands, I think, and it was broken up by Manobo clearings, too, in some areas there. So perhaps it is just as well.

Nesbit

I found the Manobo people very interesting.

Jones

Did you really?

Nesbit

Yes. In fact, my wife had seen Manobo women and how they were decorated up with earrings and all the fancy jewelry and necklaces and what-have-you. My wife was given some of the jewelry by the Manobos and which the Filipinos there said that was quite uncommon, that the Manobo women didn't part with that because that was a sign of their wealth, you know. And to their knowledge she was the first American woman that they had even made an offer to.

Jones

Well, I'm sure your wife prizes that highly.

Nesbit

She prizes it quite highly.

Jones

Particularly because of this background. Now what was this because your relationship with them there?

Nesbit

No. This rapport she built by herself.

Jones

Well, great. Wonderful.

Nesbit

She communicated quite well with the Filipino ladies and she also communicated, you might say the traveling salesmen, the Manobos the men that would come in and sell their produce. And my wife told me when she got there, if some people could eat this kind of stuff, she could eat this kind of stuff. So, we ate Manobo produce, the corn, the beans and the meat, and the whole works. So they presented her with gifts.

Jones

They considered her a friend, no doubt.

Nesbit

Yes.

Jones

Right. What about the language? Now I want to know how well you picked up the language, as well as your wife, while we are on this subject?

Nesbit

Well, I never picked up any of the Filipino language or the Manobo language myself. I didn't try to and, working with the people, they could interpret for me, and my wife was the same way.

Jones

But they knew enough English words, I suppose, so that she could communicate with them back and forth. That is a pretty interesting aspect of your experience over there. Your wife's relationship with them.

Nesbit

And, of course, like I said, she had a real good relationship with the Filipino ladies.

Jones

Well, that's very good. Well, Dick, is there any other subject or aspect of it that we need to cover here, do you think?

Nesbit

Well, I don't really think so. It is, you know, the whole operation I thought was fascinating, right from the woods down the Wasag road, down to the old Cantina, Cantina or whatever it was, the old tugboat pulling the logs to the veneer mill, on down to Milbuk. It was just quite an operation all and all, all the way around. I was impressed with the Filipino supervision. It didn't take long, you know, to figure out that they were pretty smart individuals. It amazed me at the checkpoint in mornings, when they made up their crews, how they would sort them guys out, get them all to work, and who was supposed to get paid and who wasn't supposed to get paid. There was so many people standing there - a lot of the women reported to the checkpoint in the morning, with their husbands. It was quite a congregation around there.

Jones

It takes a special knack, I guess, to sort things out under a circumstance like that.

Nesbit

Did you go out to Langali and to the north - maybe the road wasn't that far?

Jones

No, I think not. At the time I was there, Dick, the road was built pretty well up to the top of the ridge in the Kraan area, but we had just opened up the Wasag area, previously. Now the area you are speaking of was a projection out from Wasag?

Nesbit

Wasag. Yes.

Jones

No, they were just getting that road system started there. They had been working on it about a year, I guess. And I worked with the fellows on the plans for the roads up towards, up into the north, up into the high country, but they hadn't actually extended that far yet.

Nesbit

It was beautiful country, past Wasag. Very beautiful.

Jones

Real nice.

Nesbit

You could get up on the ridge there and look down on all the area, there. It was a beautiful area anyhow and then you could get up there and look down onto the coconut groves.

Jones

The groves on that narrow flat, along the ocean there?

Nesbit

Right. And you could look up the coast clear to Santa Clara, you know. It is beautiful country.

Jones

Nice country. Beautiful country. And, of course, that is the area of the Santa Clara conflict that we thought we had a chance to get that additional timber at one time, but - and I didn't know for sure that we hadn't got it until you mentioned it today. Apparently they ruled against us on that.

Nesbit

Right.

Jones

Well, I always thought we had a case, but sometimes having a good case doesn't pan out.

Nesbit

No, it doesn't always pan out, does it?

Jones

No, it doesn't. Well, Dick, if that seems to ...

Nesbit

That seems to cover pretty well.

Jones

Seems to be the story. So we will close our interview then. If other things occur to you, either jot down a memory - a memo, or get in touch with me and we will sit down and talk some more. Whatever happens.

Nesbit

Okay. Fine.

Jones

Okay.

Nesbit

I'd like to bring sometime or other, I have a map of the whole concession. I almost brought it today, I thought it would be quite interesting to review it, to look it over and kind of see where the roads were.

Jones

It would indeed, Dick, and let's still plan to try and get together the first chance we have to do that.

Nesbit

I know I read your write-up and Max Sagrado's write-up on Milbuk.

Jones

That was one of the last things we did in 1970, over there.

Nesbit

I found a copy of that in the office.

Jones

Oh, did you?

Nesbit

The plan.

Jones

Well, it, perhaps it wasn't too long, it wasn't a long-range plan, but we projected it as best we could with the information we had available at that time. Okay, thank you very much, Dick.