

Lisa Huerta:

And you were a prisoner of war?

Jose Refugio Aguilar:

Right. Yeah.

Lisa Huerta:

So that was very --

Jose Refugio Aguilar:

Well, I got hit on my leg. And I turned around and I was going down the mountain and they hit me. They hit me on my leg. It went in through the back and came out through the front. Yeah. It busted both bones.

Lisa Huerta:

Both bones in your leg?

Jose Refugio Aguilar:

Yeah. And when I stepped -- I was running and when I stepped like that, the bone cracked and my feet went all the way to the back and I fell down. [hit table] And I seen the guys running. I told a couple of them, "Hey, hey. Give me a lift, man. I can't run no more." They lift me up for a little while but then they say, "Hey, Joe, we can't do it, man." They let me down and I crawled in a hole there where there was about three or four Chinese, I think they were. Yeah, dead. So I grabbed one and put him over -- over me because the Chinese were running on top of us. They were right behind us. So I picked one up and I played dead. But the problem was that I thought -- I stayed there for about, I would say about two or three hours, something like that. And I couldn't hear anything. I would pass out and I would come up and it was snowing. So I would grab the guy out, and I said "Nobody, nobody, nobody here." When I got up to get out of the hole, I was dragging myself -- dragging myself up. [trying to sound Chinese] I looked but it was the Chinese. And I said, "Man, what are these guys saying?" I couldn't talk their language.

Lisa Huerta:

Right.

Jose Refugio Aguilar:

I just kept saying, "Whatever you do you son of a bitch, don't shoot. Okay. Don't shoot. Don't shoot. Don't shoot." So they grabbed me, put me on a canvas, and they dragged me across the border there. From then on I don't know where the hell I was [clears throat]. That's -- that's when it started.

Lisa Huerta:

And it -- and it was the Chinese that held you --

Jose Refugio Aguilar:

Yeah

Lisa Huerta:

-- in captivity

Jose Refugio Aguilar:

Uh-huh.

Lisa Huerta:

How long were you kept as a prisoner of war?

Jose Refugio Aguilar:

They tied me for 72 days. That's the day -- I remember that day because that's when they put me on the scale in Japan and I weighed 72 pounds.

Lisa Huerta:

Oh, my gosh. 72 pounds. How were you freed?

Jose Refugio Aguilar:

They were exchanging prisoners for prisoners. And I think I got exchanged in one of those.