Wisconsin Public Television
World War II Stories Project

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

CLAYTON N. CHIPMAN

Infantry, Marine Corps, World War II.

2003

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Madison, Wisconsin

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Chipman, Clayton N., (b.1926). Oral History Interview, 2003.
Video Recording : 5 videorecordings (ca. 136 min.); ½ inch, color.
Transcript : 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)
Military papers : 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Abstract

Chipman, a West Allis, Wisconsin native, discusses his military career serving with Company K, 4th Marine Division, including his experiences as an infantryman on Iwo Jima. Chipman describes enlisting in the Marine Corps at age seventeen, and he details the psychological conditioning, physical exercises, and weapons training at boot camp in California. He speaks of taking the train home for a ten-day leave, setting up Tent Camp One outside Camp Pendleton (California), and additional weapons training. Assigned to the 4th Replacement Depot, he tells of his time aboard the *USS Ranger* and going to Pearl Harbor. As a replacement, Chipman describes being assigned to Sergeant Roy Smith's platoon in Company K of the 4th Division and feeling accepted by the veterans. He states he was kicked off of mess duty after being caught eating peaches and he talks about training exercises in the Hawaiian Islands. He touches on having liberty in Hawaii and playing baseball and football. Chipman refers to football players and people he knew who were killed on Iwo Jima. Assigned to the *USS Lowndes* (APA-154) for transportation to Iwo Jima, he speaks of daily routine on the ship, visiting a battleship, boxing matches, and submarine alerts. Chipman addresses the preparations before D-Day and states, "up to the point of, say the day before D-Day, I was a kid having fun." He details D-Day on Iwo Jima: waking up at 2:30 AM, breakfast, religious service, climbing into a Higgins boat, volunteering to man an anti-aircraft machine gun, and realizing people were getting killed after seeing airplanes get shot down. He describes landing on the beach, taking cover, moving forward, and fighting alongside a Seabee who'd lost his unit. Chipman recalls his mental reactions to combat and seeing dead Marines. The fourth night of fighting he speaks of being reinforced by the 3rd Division, and he talks about losing a lot of young replacements. He characterizes Bill Compton, a Wisconsin American Indian in his unit. Chipman reports he resisted taking any souvenirs, reflects on night fighting, and reveals that at one point, because there was nowhere else to sit, he ate his K-ration while sitting on a pile of dead Japanese soldiers. Chipman describes the food and equipment he had, including a B.A.R. rifle. While fighting at Hill 382, nicknamed the "Meat Grinder," he describes being ordered to throw grenades into a series of caves and, as he was returning to his unit, being wounded by a shell. After stopping at an aide station, he speaks of walking back to the beach, spending a night aboard the *USS Indianapolis,* treatment aboard a hospital ship, and feelings of guilt for leaving his friends behind on Iwo Jima. Placed in an Army hospital at Pearl Harbor, Chipman states that people in the hospital ward all suffered from nightmares, and he describes his reaction to news about casualties. He describes the routine of the hospital ward, eating ice cream while on mess duty, and sneaking out of the hospital unit. Chipman reports the high casualty rates of his unit, reflects getting a boost in morale from

the flag raising on Mount Suribachi, and talks about having post-traumatic stress symptoms. After a brief return to the States, he discusses being assigned to a military police company on Saipan. He states they were about to assault a Japanese position on Mount Tapochau when news of the atomic bombs and the Japanese surrender came through on the jeep radio. He details his homecoming to West Allis (Wisconsin), researching how many of his classmates had died in the war, and raising money for a memorial called the Walk of Honor. Chipman touches on using the GI Bill to attend the Milwaukee States Teachers College, attending Iwo Jima and Marine Corps reunions, and the efforts of the veteran's wives to keep the organizations running.

Biographical Sketch

Chipman (b. March 29, 1926) entered the Marines in February 1944 at age seventeen and served as an infantryman at Iwo Jima. After the war he taught in the Milwaukee school system and eventually settled in Brookfield (Wisconsin). He served as the Executive Secretary and President of the 4th Marine Division Association.

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Related Materials Note: Photographs of this narrator's military service can be found in Wisconsin Public Television. Wisconsin World War II Stories records (WVM Mss 1390).

Interviewed by Mik Derks, June 5 (or July 29?), 2003
Transcribed by Wisconsin Public Television staff, n.d.
Transcript edited & reformatted by Wisconsin Veterans Museum staff, 2010
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010

Interview Transcript:

Derks: I'd like to start where you figured you'd probably have a military career.

Chipman: Well, the psyche during World War II was a lot different than it is today, or has been since. Everybody was patriotic and soon as you turned seventeen, most of the youngsters were trying to figure out, you know, how they could participate. So when I was seventeen, I started badgering my mother and father to allow me to join the Marines. And I wanted the Marines because a lot of the--ah, hype, or whatever they were feeding us, was about the Marines in the Pacific. So, finally, my dad said, "Let him go, he won't be satisfied until he goes." We went down to the recruiter's station--the four of us--we skipped school one afternoon--went down to the Marine Corps recruiting station and talked to the sergeants down there. One of our friends backed out, the sergeant was too rough. And the other one, I forget his name or what he did, but two of us joined. And Larry Bonestrasser was killed in Okinawa, and of course I got in on Iwo Jima. And that's the way it started.

Derks: When was that?

Chipman: That was February of 1944. Early February of '44.

Derks: So you were pretty young when Pearl Harbor happened. Do you remember that?

Chipman: I remember it, but I'd have to figure out how old I was at the time, but we were listening, my brother and dad and family were listening to a football game on a Sunday afternoon when the news came through. So, but it was a lot of new experiences.

Derks: So in '44, when you went in, you were pretty aware of what was going on in the war? Newsreels and newspapers and everything, you were following it?

Chipman: Yes.

Derks: So there was no question that you would be going in some capacity probably.

Chipman: And it was a challenge. I usually step into a challenge, unless I'm too concerned bout it. As I get older I'm more concerned, but—

Derks: Was seventeen a typical age? Or was that early?

Chipman: Well, John O'Connor from Onalaska, a person we met going on the train to San Diego, joined at fifteen. I just heard from him and he sent me a copy of his records. And he really was fifteen, but most of the people were eighteen. There were a few of us that were seventeen. And there were some that were drafted. And that's an interesting story. You know in Milwaukee we went down to an old factory building where, that they had set up for a medical examination center, and at the end the ones that passed formed a line, and a Marine Sergeant said, "All of you who volunteered for the Marines, take three steps forward." So I don't know, I think seven or eight of us, and he said, "All right, if you volunteered for the Navy, step, take two steps forward." And a group of young fellas did. And then the Sergeant walked up and down the line, he said, "You, you and you, you're in the Marines, take a step forward." So there were some men drafted, but not many.

Derks:: So what happened after you enlisted?

Chipman: Well we went to boot camp. And that was--everything was so new and interesting. Every time we stopped on the train, in a little city, the Red Cross ladies were out with doughnuts and coffee, and of course we had never seen a mountain, or desert, or anything like that. We got to California and the train stopped and it was alongside of a orange grove, and I think about half the guys run off and picked the orange, 'cause they'd only seen apples on trees. And we arrived at night, and immediately the drill instructors that met us at the train station started to condition us. They were rough. And--now as I look back on the entire boot camp training, I can reflect on it and I can see how they, first of all, tried to eliminate anything that was related to being a civilian. And once they got you down to your base instincts, then they started to build you up. And, a lot of, some, some of the people, and I think at the time--I didn't really realize, but I, I remembered some of the stuff because as we got near the end of training, the ah, the DI, drill instructor, he would give us breaks, and he would tell us about how he was wounded on Tarawa and he'd show us his wound, and he'd tell us about his girlfriends and stuff like that you know. And he became more hum-, human. But, it was all trying to get you into a psychology to be a Marine. And there was a, actually as we came through boot camp, and jumping ahead of the story a little bit, some were warriors, I was a Marine. And I was concerned, I knew what to do and I did it. But, we had some people that were outstanding warriors. We had Bill Compton who was a full blooded Indian from the Dakotas, just enjoyed the battle. 'Course, he was one of the first ones up and one of the first ones to get killed. The Sergeant in the 4th Marine Division that I had was Ray Smith. Just a, a total southern gentleman from Florida. And I knew during the battle that when I peeked out of a fox hole and I could see his helmet, I knew I was okay. He was, his head was up all the time, he

was taking care of his men. You know, I hope that's something that you are interested in.

Derks: Oh, yeah, there's nothing we're not interested in! [both laugh] I was just thinking, when you said the guy that was on Tarawa, they knew what you were going into.

Chipman: Oh, yes. Oh yes, and they realized the tougher they were on us, the more chance we'd have of coming home in one piece, so. And boot camp was, I had played high school sports in the fall, football, basketball and track, and summer I played American Legion baseball, so physically boot camp wasn't challenging, it was more interesting. Trying to beat your time on ah, obstacle course, and I didn't care much for the gas chamber where you had to get used to having a gas mask on, and I don't know what kind of gas they used, but ah, I have to say, the food was very good and plentiful. And the first night, well, the first night, they did not feed us, we came in after the supper meal, chow. And they wouldn't let us go to sleep, they kept having us do something till maybe two in the morning or so, and then they let us lay down in the attic of one of the buildings. We got maybe two, three hours sleep. And then the next day was issuance of clothing and so forth and ah, after supper everybody went to bed. You know, by that time they had assigned us cots and--nine o'clock, well it was right after supper, was probably six-thirty or so, everybody went to the sack as they call it. Nine o'clock the DI came out and he called roll call, and everybody got out except one young man from Wisconsin. And he just wouldn't get out, so the DI, I think again, he was teaching lessons to everyone, he dumped a bucket of water on the youngster. So we learned in a hurry, when the DI said something, do it. And ah, I remember the--learning, I think they called it Judo then, karate. And unless you really threw your man down and made him bounce, you'd have to get on the bottom and they'd throw you down. Ah, for--young seventeen, eighteen year olds, it was no problem. Bayonet practice on sacks of sand. And by the way, the Japanese that we fought were trained with live people, and if you read anything about the rape of Nanking, or Manila, or the Chinese fight the Japanese had in China, they used their prisoners of war as targets for their bayonet practice, so the training is another whole story. How totally different it was.

Derks: How long was your basic training?

Chipman: It was eight weeks. And then there was a week on the rifle range. And I had never thrown a firecracker, I had never held a rifle, and it was a little interesting learning with 22's first and then graduating up to the M1's. And shooting a pistol, I never fired a pistol before. And the thing that was probably more apprehensive than the gas chamber, was taking compound C, which was a, a putty-type dynamite. Then you take a little match and

you'd stick the head in the, the compound C, and then you had to light the other end and put it down and run. [laughs] That was fun too.

Derks: So you didn't like blowing stuff up? [both laugh]

Chipman: Not really. Didn't like loud noises either. Got used to 'em. 'Course graduation day, where you paraded, that was a little apprehensive, too, because everything we did was as a unit. If one made a mistake, the whole group paid for it. And not always, but many of the times, they tried to weld you into a group where you were responsible for the person on either side of you, and they drummed into you such things as that if you do have to retreat, or you do have to move, you never leave a wounded or a dead Marine behind. You take 'em with you. And that was kind of reassuring that, you know, if something happened you know your friends were going to take care of you. And another thing that I took out of boot camp, was that, you--looked at something and it was more apprehensive getting to it than doing it. For instance, jumping off a tower, oh I don't know how high it was, with your shoes and your helmet and all your clothes on and so forth, and then having to swim the length of the pool. Once you got up there, why, someone was behind you, you better jump, you know. And I kind of laugh and chuckle at some of this stuff, but I think it was deadly serious, you know. And then, as I say, a lot of times you were more afraid of getting your friends or your buddies in trouble than you were of yourself. And that's what they wanted, you know, so that you could, ah--and of course every, after the final drill inspection, everybody ran for the telephones to call home and say, “Mom, send me money so I can come home on ten days' leave.” Of course that was another, nothing to do with the battle.

Derks: That was after you graduated from basic?

Chipman: Yeah.

Derks: You had a ten day leave? You came back to Wisconsin?

Chipman: Yes, we, oh--you know it's two and a half days on a train, so you lost five right there. You were home about five, but it was nice to get home with your family and friends and so forth.

Derks: In your uniform.

Chipman: Yes. Of course it was bare, as far as after the war when you had all your ribbons and patches and so forth. But then we came back, and the train trips were interesting, too. When the Marines took us someplace on a train, we had, we call 'em cattle cars, but they were sleeping cars. When we went home on leave, 'course we were just on regular coaches, and

some of us stood up the majority of the way because there were women on there with young children and so forth, so--But on the way back, we came back to Oceanside, and then we were taken to Camp Pendleton, I think right across the highway from Oceanside. And we had to set up what they call Tent Camp One. And at the time, I thought it was, you know, really that we were setting up a camp from nothing--just a bare field and a valley. No showers, we bathed in a stream. And we had to dig our own heads, and we ate in the open, and then gradually it built up into a--where we had tents and we, they built a mess hall and so forth. But I think too that was purposefully done, because they did have barracks there. They just wanted you to know you can go into nothing and you can come out fairly comfortable. That was about three weeks at the most. And, they taught us how to use the different weapons. Besides a rifle and a bayonet we learned how to use machine guns, and I think those were, that was the main one in that particular area. Then we had night patrols in the Pendleton Mountains, and that was an experience too of, you know, the Japanese were notorious night fighters and they did most of their fighting at night. So, they were getting us used to moving and operating in a group at night. And they gave us leave to Los Angeles. I think I had one or two weekends in Los Angeles. We just went to see the Rose Bowl and bowled and sights, looked at different places.

Derks: What time of year was that?

Chipman: That had to be May. We went in boot camp in end of February, into March and April, and moved back in May. And in June, I forget, I think we started out as a 68th Replacement Draft, a group of people, group of Marines, and sent over to Pearl Harbor. And I think they changed numbers, I think it finally turned into the 4th Replacement Depot, or ah, Replacement. And we were put on the *USS Ranger*, which was the, according to what we understood, it was the first American carrier to see action against the Germans in the North Sea. And of course now, in '44, they were using it to, ah, shuttle corsairs over. It was a big thrill, we slept on the hanger deck underneath a corsair; the young guy that never saw an airplane outside of in the sky. We did a lot of exercising, you, always cleaning your weapon no matter what it was, that was once or twice a day. Played catch and started to learn how to read. I mean really read. I read as I had to in high school, you know, for the different courses, but it was a lot of time on you hands on the trip over, and we, they had a quite an extensive library.

Derks: Was that a convoy or just a single carrier?

Chipman: I think it was just, I'm not sure about that, but I think it was one carrier going from San Diego to Pearl Harbor. I ah—

Derks: This is just over to Pearl.

Chipman: This is just getting us overseas. Then they put us in a replacement depot, and we were there a week or two, and they told us to pack up and we were gonna go down to the Marianas, which they were fighting on Saipan from June 15th on. And they said we were gonna be replacements for Tinian, which was three miles away from Saipan. And the 4th Division was down there, and I think they had a week's rest right on Saipan before they hit Tinian. So we boarded that APA expecting to go down to be replacements, and when we woke up in the morning we were in a port on Maui. And the only thing I can figure out is, on Tinian when, it was easier than they thought it would be. We spent a, again a couple weeks till the veterans came back.

Derks: What's an APA?

Chipman: It's an attack personnel ship, I don't know the exact name, but they carried the troops. I can get, explain that, that part a little later on. But we just were kept busy doing some little things, keeping things clean and so forth until the veterans got back. And then it was interesting, seeing these fellas come back. Some of 'em were wounded, many of 'em were wounded, and a lot of interesting things. They talked about it, and they talked about people that were killed, and to this day I never knew the people, but I did hear 'em talk, being talked about, in the Marshalls which was a previous battle that they were in, and then the Marianas. And I remember those names of the guys that they talked about. I don't know why, but they just stuck. And, as I mentioned, Roy Smith before, we--I was put into his squad, or into his platoon. And just the greatest guy you'd, you'd ever want to meet. The veterans took us in, you know, you'd think we, we'd a been strangers or oh, that's a boot or something like that, but they took us in. And in retrospect, I think that they knew they'd have to depend on us and we'd have to depend on them. But Sergeant Smith, during some of the, when they came back, they gave him, I don't know, two or three weeks of kind of relax, duty of not much. And he, he had a Japanese bayonet and he says, "Here," he said, "Take--send this to you dad." I said, "Well, thank you very much, but I really don't want it." And I had made some kind of agreement with myself, a covenant or something like that. After I found out more about what was going on, I thought well, I'm not gonna take any souvenirs. I did, most of the time, I didn't take anything, I can tell that later on, too. But, once we started training, then we got into the real stuff. We had to learn how to fire bazookas, flame throwers, we worked with tanks. We had to learn how to fire mortars and--because, when you realize that out of approximately 70,000 Marines, 40.4% of them were casualties on Iwo, and in the line companies, like I was in K Company, that was on the line most of the time, you know, front line, they, they sometimes, if you figure it out, you can make the figures say

that K Company had 103% casualties, because of the replacements that came in. Well, we, we ah--they weren't gonna put the veterans, I don't know if I should tell this or not. They weren't gonna put the veterans on mess duty you know, so they put us new people on. We each had a duty in the kitchen to help the mess sergeants out. And, oh, after a week or so, we'd come in the front door you know, and there were two huge aluminum vats of half peaches. About six of us walked in, and of course, they were too good to pass up and the Mess Sergeant happened to walk in, we had one or two a piece I guess. He says, "What the hell do you think this is, a USO?" And that was the end of our mess duty. But ah, we did all kinds of problems, night problems again, in our--we had to attack like a native village in the jungle, you know, and Maui, part of, I think it was the western side, was pretty much jungle. And they took all the new people and we each had a turn to go up with the group with a Browning automatic rifle, and after we got back, they handed me a Browning automatic rifle and said, "This is your rifle from now on." And I don't know what the criteria was except I think they were watching to see, when you squeezed the trigger and a lot of rounds went out, it tended to rise. And I could hold it down. So, but a lot of other guys got 'em, too. But that was platoon and company size, and then later on we had, and I don't have the dates. I had 'em in that folder I forgot. We had regimental size exercise--exercises, hitting a beach on one of the Hawaiian Islands, then a total division one.

Derks: Now, were they training you specifically for Iwo Jima?

Chipman: I don't know. We didn't know for a long time, and we, before we found out we were going to Iwo Jima we had gone through maneuvers, and we had a stay in Pearl Harbor on the ships, and then on our way out the brought out the relief maps of the island and the information and some of the stuff I showed you, the different weapons we were going to face and so forth. But nobody knew, I don't know how low in the echelon of officers knew where we were going. I have no idea.

Derks: Did you have assault training?

Chipman: Assault?

Derks: The landing?

Chipman: Oh yeah, that's what I was talking about--the assault on the village, and then the assault on the beach with the regiment, and then the whole division thing. And we'd do the same thing we did at Iwo, we'd go down the rope ladders, cargo nets they called 'em, and into the Higgins boat or whatever the--amtracks. And then you'd go right in, hit the beach, form up and move in, and that was about, about it. And the last time it was under Naval gunfire, when it was division. They fired, you know, over

our heads, so--but we--we had liberty. I did not take liberty because I wanted to play baseball, and that was the only time we had to play baseball, was when the company had liberty. And so I just stayed in and we got a game, ballgame going and that was more fun than, I don't think there was much on Maui at that time anyway. I didn't drink, I didn't smoke so--but ah, there were a lot of things. There was a little gambling going on, but it only lasted a day or two until most of the people ran out of money. And if you wanted to you could go to movies in the evening. And I would say the church attendance was pretty high, even there. And ah--

Derks: Now, did liberty mean **[End of TAPE WCWW2-169]** I was going to ask you if having liberty meant that you were about to ship out?

Chipman: No, I don't think it did. I'm sure it had nothing to do in Hawaii ah, with that because it was regular. After Iwo, this is way ahead of the story, but after Iwo, ah, wounded Marines and submariners could go to the Royal Hawaiian for a week for twenty-five cents, and it was perpetual liberty for that week, you know. But ah, I guess that was kind of a reward for getting wounded or--the sailors on submarines, I can't understand that. But I don't, I don't think so. Could'a been.

Derks: So then when did you find out you were shipping out? How do you find out?

Chipman: Well, I think the pace of training picks up and--the, you're living out of a sea bag, on a cot, in a tent, and there isn't much really to get ready. But the word came down, I would assume that the officers knew a target date that, whether they knew where they were going or not, I don't know, but I assume they had some kind of target date--at least the commanding officers of the companies and so forth, because that training picked up. And then they would--the sergeant would just tell us, "Well, we're getting ready to ship out." And, well, there were a lot of things. There was a football team. We'd march eight hours, ah, excuse me, we'd march to the football field which was quite a ways a way, and we'd, the Seabees and the ah, different units, Army units, on the island would have football teams and we'd play. By the way, Smiley Johnson, who was with the Packers in, I think 1950 and '51, was killed on D-Day on Iwo. But, that's off the sequence. And, I, my--

Derks: When did you say he played with the Packers?

Chipman: He played with the Packers, in, nineteen--was it '40 and '41? Oh yeah, thank you, oh yeah, I did, I'm sorry, it was '40 and '41, thank you, you were listening!

Derks: Tell us that again.

Chipman: Okay, ah, we--On certain days when the football teams would play against other teams, we would march to the field and we would watch. And one of the players on the 4th Division team was Smiley Johnson, who had played with the Packers in the 1940 and '41. And there are several stories about his demise on D-Day, February 19th of 1945. The thing that comes to my mind is a mortar landed close to him and he was killed. But he was one of the officers that everybody loved, he was just the greatest guy. But, I think it was--January twenty-seventh of '45, we marched out to the ship, to the APA, *Lowndes* was the name of it, I think it was APA 158, I could be wrong, it could be 154, but anyways. Which we lived on for quite a few weeks then--but the infantry marched alongside of the road, and the artillery were in trucks going there. But of course, they had their big equipment and they had to deal with their equipment and so on. That's the last time I saw one of our fellas that I went to school with. Bob Dale was killed on D-Day on Iwo, he was in the infantry and the last time I saw him, he was on the truck and he called out and we waved at each other and never saw him after that. He got a Silver Star on D-Day. He volunteered to unload Higgins boats full of artillery, and maybe some of the pictures you'll show later on will show the devastation on the beach. Of course, he volunteered to do that and he got killed on the beach, so--but anyways we, then we lived on, on that ship, and we went to Pearl Harbor again, we ah, anchored there, at least the APA's did. And they gave us liberty several times and we had, we could go over to a recreation area, a huge recreation area and you could get into a touch football game or a baseball game, just a huge complex. So they kept us busy, and then we had one more maneuver in the--Hawaiian Islands, similar to the other ones. And there's one interesting thing, in the USO in Honolulu, they had a book and all the servicemen could sign if they wanted to, and what day and what time they were there, and I met a fellow by the name of Ralph Schubert that I played football and baseball with. And his name was in there, but he wasn't around, so I put my name in and the date and the time and we'd go back maybe twice a day, you know, to see. And finally we met and he was on a battleship. And he says, we had our picture taken, and he said, "You ever been on a battleship? C'mon, let's go, I'll show you ours." I can't remember the name of it though. Took us out there and showed me around and had supper on the ship, and it got pretty late and the Higgins boats that would transport us back and forth, you know, from our ship to the shore or wherever, they stopped running at a specific hour and I was, I was stuck on a battleship. So we went up and explained it to the officer of the deck, and he saw a Higgins boat going past and he blew a whistle and they came over and he said, "We have a Marine that has to get to the *Lowndes*, could you take him over there?" And of course, if you hitchhiked in the, anyplace, you'd didn't stand more that two or three minutes, people'd pick you up. So they took me back, and so I didn't get court martialed for being [laughs] absent without leave, so, but ah.

And the daily routine on the ship as we went from Pearl Harbor to Eniwetok and then to Saipan was ah, of course you had, I don't know whether it was one or two meals a day, and you stood in line a lot, but the first thing in the morning, you did exercises or calisthenics with your rifle and ah, to stay in shape and so forth. And there was a lot of lessons that went on, and as I say, once we left Pearl Harbor then they, we studied the relief maps and the other maps, the maps I had over, brought along today showed where all, they thought the different defensive guns were and so forth. We, they held church services regularly, and each afternoon the typical thing was boxing matches on one of the big hatches. And we'd be with our buddies and friends and so forth and talking and doing things, and whoever was running it would say, "Well, who's gonna box next?" So the friend next to us would say, "Let's go up there and box." We'd go up there and beat the tar out of each other. When it was over, why, we'd come back, continue talking. The lieutenant that censored my letters, he, on ah, on the V-mail they call it, you know, you take a photograph, and he put on it, "One hell of a fighter." So I--after the war I did work out with the boxers to get in shape for football, but I didn't want to box. And reading again, did a lot a lot of reading. We had a, I think the largest laundry in the world. And when we needed to launder our fatigue, you know, dungarees we'd called em, we'd run a rope through the sleeves and through the legs and toss off the back of the ship and drag 'em till they were clean. And, but a lot of experiences. Saw flying fish for the first time, which was just fascinating, you know, that fish could fly. Probably the most hectic thing was when they had a submarine alert. And they would lock us down in our compartments, and you didn't know whether they had, the radar had picked up a whale or an American sub or a Japanese sub. We were fortunate, we didn't have any mishaps, and ah--I'm trying to think of what else we did.

Derks: How long was the trip?

Chipman: Well, we left Maui on the 27th of January and we hit Iwo on the 19th of February. I thought it was around 70 days or so, I don't know, you'd have to figure it out.

Derks: And you sailed directly there?

Chipman: No, we sailed to Eniwetok, we had a day or two at Eniwetok. And see, each time we stopped, like at Eniwetok, there'd be more ships come into that convoy. And, one source says that there were five hundred ships in that convoy of all kinds, and another source said there was eight hundred, so I don't, you'd have to see which one is correct, I'm not sure. But it was huge, as far as you could see there were ships.

Derks: How'd that make you feel?

Chipman: Ah, it was very comforting to know that there were a lot of ships around, you weren't the only one out there. But, I don't, the ah--see, up to the point of, say the day before D-Day, I was a kid having fun. You know, we didn't think much of the consequences of a battle, and of course they were, you know, they were conditioning us in many ways. And I think the, the day before D-Day, our Sergeant, Smith, sat down alongside of me and, I don't know, I think I was sharpening my K-Bar or something, and he said, "Are you afraid?" And I, I really didn't have an answer for him, I had to think it through, and I said, "To me being afraid is common sense. You know, if you know there's a danger there and you're aware of it, sure, you, you have to be afraid of it. But scared, I think scared, you've lost your capability to think and to react." I said, "I don't think I'm scared at this point." I think he did it to each, each one of his men. He kind of talked to 'em. He was an old man, he was about twenty-one, twenty-two. [laughs] At that time in the Marine Corps if you got to twenty-two, you were old. We'd call 'em, if you got that old, we'd call 'em Pop you know. But ah, and then, I think that gets us to D-Day, February 19th of 1945. They got us up about, I'd say 2:00, 2:30 in the morning, something like that. And on our ship, we had anything we wanted. They had steak, there were eggs, there were, just anything that you would want and as much as you wanted. And some other people have said that the ships they were on did not feed that well, but ours did. And right after we ate, there were services. They were joint, you know, the chaplains, who were all I think just top-notch people, they held Holy Communion or Lord's Supper, whatever you want to call it. And they knew what was coming. And then, while it was still dark we were back, and then they always say, "Saddle up," so you get your knapsack on and your cartridge belt and make sure everything you have. And they gave us what they call the battle ration, similar to K-rations but it was a little more sophisticated in that it had some chocolate bar in it, I mean a candy bar. And ah, then we lined up. You have to realize that these bunks are about that far apart and they go, I don't know, five or six up and they're about that far in between 'em. And we lined up and--I just read over some records that were declassified recently, and the planning was minute. Every person and everywhere he was going to stand and then where his unit was going to stand and when he was going to move out, and when we got up to, on deck, we were each assigned to a, I think they call it a divet, where the Higgins boats were hanging on the side. And we stood there until they lowered 'em and it was time to get out and go down that. And I showed you the picture on the cargo net and climbing down. That was an interesting experience. 'Course we'd had it before, but not out in that area, and the swells were quite high. I heard the number 16 feet high, but I don't think they were that high, but that boat would come up and, boom, it'd go right down when the swell passed. One person broke an ankle, but everybody else made it okay. And you didn't

tie anything, your helmet was loose, your knapsack was loose, your cartridge belt, so that if you did go in, you know, you could jet-, jettison that stuff real quick.

Derks: Was it harder than it looks; to go down that net?

Chipman: Ah, it was--apprehensive. I don't think physically there was too much that would'a challenged, you know, an in-condition Marine, but it was hard enough. And the ah, that brings me to a point that's corollary to this and that is, you don't know the capacity, mentally or physically or psychologically or emotionally, that you can reach. And, in a traumatic experience like that, it just, you can, you go way beyond what you thought your capabilities were. I think the endorphins were flowing pretty well. There might be some other psychological reason, but the ah--carrying the pack and the BAR and the ammunition and so forth, and I ended the day carrying two canisters of machine gun ammunition, all of that. I didn't get sore like I do now when I try to wash a window or something. But ah, then we--you go to, or we, they all went to a rendezvous area, and we were talking about the schedule, and the plans are beautiful, and they're minute and once the firing goes, the schedule and the plans are pretty much out the window. But the salvation is that you've been trained to do just about anything. In fact, leadership too, and when the officers and the sergeants and so forth, you had, had some experience with that. But getting back to the Higgins boat, I didn't know anybody who, who became ill, in that, on that particular day. And we circled, again, time-wise I don't know exactly how long it was, it was light when we got on, and I don't know what time it got light, you know, to give you a minute or something. But anyways, one of the experiences in that boat was, ah--and I can't remember how many men were in it, ah, probably a platoon or, maybe--

Derks: How many are in a platoon?

Chipman: There's approximately 240 in a company, and about twelve in a squad and three squads, so thirty-six or so. And depends upon the corpsman, whether he's with you, or you have the machine-gunners with you or the mortars with you and so forth, but that would be a close estimate. And one of the experiences was, in rendezvousing we were fairly close, again, I don't know, half a mile, three hundred yards, whatever, when one of the battleships shot a broadside of the sixteen inch guns. And it just pushed the boat, just pushed it, the concussion, you know just being way on the side of it. And the other thing was--Japanese Air Force was still active at that point. In fact, on the second day, there was an air raid and they did sink, I think it was the *Bismarck Sea*, I'm pretty sure it was the Bis--either the *Liscomb Bay* or *Bismarck Sea*. Another interesting thing was those--the Marine aviators that were on that ship, were brought in as replacements, and riflemen, or you know, leaders. So every, every Marine

is a rifleman, but that proved it. There were many models of Higgins boats, but the one we were on had two fifty-caliber machine guns for anti-aircraft defense. And they asked, I don't know, two or three times, maybe four times, volunteer to handle 'em. Well, ah, when Corporal Culp, who I know quite well, he said, "I'll take one." I thought, “Well, I will too.” So I volunteered, and we were sitting up above the sides, you know, the people down in that Higgins boat couldn't see. But we were sitting up there and we could see the shells bursting, and the smoke, and sand, and things going hundreds of feet in the air on the whole length of the beach. It was a panoramic view, even though I think at the time there was no such word, but ah, and--another, well, then it started to get a little traumatic. I was looking up, you know, for airplanes, and of course I was fascinated by the bombardment on the beaches, and we were running in at that time. I saw a corsair come in for, strafing and a, probably a rocket run. And he never pulled out, and he hit, and then you could see a big ball of black smoke come up where he hit. But I think he, he was probably dead before he hit the ground. And a few minutes later, I was watching and there was a little airplane, a grasshopper we call 'em, a Piper Cub I guess or something like that, a spotter for a battleship. And all of a sudden it just nosed down, no, nothing, just right down it went--took a nose dive. And a few minutes later, we're, we're running into the beach all this time, there was a, on the north end of the island, there was a PBY flying over there and I was watching it. I wasn't sure whether it was one of ours, or one of theirs. All of a sudden the tail dropped off of it, and I assume it was hit by a shell. And it did, there was nothing, it just, when the tail went off, it went right straight down. And that's when I started to think, “People are getting killed here, what the heck am I doing here?” [laughs] And a little later, we hit the beach. Now, there's a discussion on this, the records say one thing, but I have a report that, let's see, Stanford Duvall was a spotter, a forward observer for a battleship. His brother was our Executive Officer ah, let's see, Claude, Claude Duvall. They got together and they wrote their history, because they were both on Iwo and they both landed early, and they came to the conclusion that the forward observer landed exactly at nine o'clock. He looked at his watch. Now all the books will say 9:02. I don't know who's right but. Well, he was a lieutenant at the time, Lieutenant Duvall, figured that it was approximately 9:35 when we hit the beach, so there were a wave of amtracks with seventy-five millimeter guns on 'em, that was first wave, and then there was three waves of I, I believe there were three waves of amtracks with troops on, and then we came. So, I--we were in one of the fourth or fifth waves that hit the beach. And--'course when, when there were some zinging noises going past and a couple thuds on the front of the Higgins boat, the officer called us down, and he said, "There's no use getting killed out here, come on down." And ah, when--

Derks: When you were sitting there, still at the fifty-millimeter, could you see the others, the amtracks landing? Were you close enough?

Chipman: I would say before I could see the amtracks landing, that they called us down. I don't recall seeing 'em land. When we landed, the ramp in front goes down, the whole front goes down on the beach, and everybody runs off, and we're taught what to do, to spread out and so forth. But in your peripheral vision, two things impressed me. One was, to our left was three rows of dead Marines, just lined up as they got off and, and it had to be an airburst that got 'em all at once, something to that effect. And, the other thing was the, the black volcanic ash that, you know, you're used to running on beach, beaches, sand color, beige or whatever. This was black ash. And there was no wreckage on the beach. So, I imagine if I had to come with a, pinpoint some times, if I, the Air Force would know what time these guys attacked, and I think that no wreckage on the beach indicates you were in awful early, you know. But we all ran and the first hole we could find, the shell hole, down we went. Because the, by that time they were starting to shell. You know, the--I guess the first wave or two it wasn't too bad for small arms fire, but by the time we got in after a half hour, they had opened up with their artillery and so forth. And I don't know, one of our people that comes to the reunions, he said, "I was afraid to hold up a cigarette, that they would light it for me." But, but I think the ah, noise of a shell zipping over your head, it, it could have been higher.

And then things were exploding quite a bit, but we tried to ah--move, because we knew that the beach was being shelled and was gonna continue to be shelled, and there was no use staying there and taking it, so we moved ahead. And I think one of the first concepts that came to my mind was, there's absolutely no control here. There's absolutely no control. And automatically turned to the Lord and prayed, and I think I prayed for quite a while. And I talked to people, and they have similar reactions, and we'd look for another shell hole within a short distance, and we'd either crawl or we'd run, because where the shells landed the land mines were blown, and if it wasn't disturbed, why, they had land mines buried. And one of--before we got off of the real water part of it, you know close to the water, I heard one of the officers call out and he says, he says, "Let's get the hell out of here!" He said, "This is no place for us!" So we started moving up, and that's what we did. I, I think the airfield was up 350 to 400 yards, and it took us all day to get up there. And ah, we didn't see any, we saw the pillboxes, and we--but we didn't see any Japs at all. 'Course there was firing going on, and they were all concealed and so forth. And D-Day was mainly this artillery coming in, and so forth. [**End of Tape WCWW2-170]**

Derks: I apologize for all these interruptions.

Chipman: No problem.

Derks: I hate making you sit here so long.

Chipman: I've been interested talking to these fellows. [laughs]

Derks: You were talking about trying to move up the beach, and it sounded like you didn't even have a target to fire your weapon at.

Chipman: Not really. We--It was at that time, during the day, not early in the morning, there were some rifle men around and machine gun and so forth, but it really started when they brought in the tanks and the artillery, and then the duels between the big guns was part of it. But we moved, up either crawling or running quickly and down. First thing, well--I told you about the reaction psychologically. It was reinforced on the way up--outside of our casualties that were right on the water line, I saw a Marine and a, just laying down with his rifle in his hand, and his one foot, I don't remember which one, above the ankle was blown off. And he evidently bled to death. And you know, as you move up there are so many casualties, and there are only so many corpsmen, so maybe it was one they couldn't get to. That's kind of upsetting. And I saw another one later on, he was--not a stitch on, and he looked like a road map, just blood lines all over, you know. If you look at the red lines, you know, highways on a road map. Another one I saw, these are Marines. There was nothing wrong, but he was dead. Checked him and he was dead. Couldn't see anything. Probably concussion, I don't know. About 10:00 or 10:30 in the morning I was in a hole alone and someone jumped in with me. And we, you always say something, you know, "Hello" and "What outfit are you with," and so forth. It was a Seabee. I couldn't figure out what Seabee's could do on D- Day, with what was going on. I thought it was lucky if it crawled.

Derks: Just a second, are you hearing his shoes? Could you be careful? I don't want to miss any of this.

Chipman: Okay. We talked and he didn't know where to go. He was lost from his unit. I said, "Well, stay with us," you know. And so we moved up and when we got set in, we got up to the airfield at the end, about four o'clock or so. Then we dug in because it--evidently they decided they wouldn't try to cross the airfield, you know, near dark. When we came up in there, Sergeant Smith said, "Well, keep him with us. We got another man." So he stayed with us that night, and he had had two canisters of ammunition. They were happy to get it, you know, to have that. 'Course nobody really slept the first night. Well, I don't think anybody ever really slept. They dozed. And they--there was shelling the entire night long. I mean it wasn't constant, but there was shelling and so on. The second day,

February 20th, we moved out at, oh, I suppose O-800, or O-8:30. We had to cross that airfield. We did a wheel, what they call a wheel, to the right to go down the airfield. Soon as we started moving the Japanese machine guns opened up and the mortars came in. I can remember when I heard that--you immediately go down, and I found a hole about as big as a golf ball and I tried to squeeze into that. But we moved ahead until we got to the revetments where they had parked the airplanes and that. And then the rest of the day was pretty much hand grenades over the revetments, at each other.

Derks: They were that close?

Chipman: Oh yeah. They were--A lot of times we didn't see them because they were popping in and out of caves and spider holes and stuff like that. The second night we were on the airfield and we had captured a gun emplacement, an anti-aircraft gun emplacement on the end of one of the runways. And three of us were put in that hole. I had the automatic rifle, so I was there with my assistant B.A.R. man and so forth. And two things I remember distinctly. One was that the Japanese had to have that gun emplacement sighted in as theirs, because every minute or two there'd be a shell at the bottom of the forty or fifty foot drop, and then one over our heads. And that was all night just dozing and then bang or wiz over your head. And the other thing was that I developed my philosophy of smoking. I never smoked, but I, I, it didn't make any difference to me. But some of our fellas had to smoke at night, and you don't light up at night. So they'd put a poncho over their head and they'd light their cigarette underneath that poncho. But you could just see the shape of that poncho. And if I could see it, the Japanese could see it. And I think there were a lot of good marines that got killed because guys had to smoke at night. To this day I just have no use for smoking, not the people, smoking. The second day--well, the days between the first airfield after we moved out, was--sometimes we'd move 200 yards, sometimes we wouldn't, you know. And, I think it was the fourth night, the 3rd Division came on to reinforce us and they took over in our line. Oh, the second night, I was digging a foxhole, and I dug down and I hit an ant's hill, ant colony, so I selected anther spot to dig a foxhole. I was--I laugh at some of these things, but they were serious at that time, you know? But when the 3rd Division came in, before light they moved through, and that night about dark I got three replacements. Twice I got three replacements, and those poor kids just out of boot camp, they didn't have to cross the beach where the firing was heavy, and you could--I was supposed to tell them, show them what I could, stuff like that. But those young kids didn't last long. Anyways, that fourth night, I was dozing off and someone jumped on my head, and started to apologize. I had, just before it landed on my--I had a helmet on. You never take your helmet off. I just could hear this machine gun open up. You know, you're so alert even though you're

dozing. We knew then that these fellas were moving through us and we were going to be back. Well, we were back for about six hours. Some interesting things happened. We were in reserve twice while I was there. The first time, after four days--I don't know, you probably want to cut this. After four days, we pulled out and went back to a beach area and getting settled for the rest. I said "Sarge, I have to go to the bathroom, where's the head?" "Go find a shell hole." He said, "Take your shovel and go find it." So I went and had to go to the bathroom--first time in four days. I never thought of it. 'Course we weren't getting much to eat either. Just K-rations once a day. I came back and they had opened number ten cans of half peaches and bacon. They had a little fire going. I got my ten pieces of bacon and I said," Sarge, where do I fry this bacon." And he says, "On your shovel." I thought that was interesting. Then I talked to Bill Compton. I think I mentioned him before, the Indian boy. He came up. Now here's the difference between me as a Marine and him as a warrior. He came up and we'd been real good friends, the whole bunch that came in together as replacements. And he says, "Chip, when you hit them, they hump up just like a deer." Now there's a kid that grew up hunting, you know? Well we talked a little bit, and things went on. And the--we had about six or seven hours then we went back in the line again. And of course you talk about who got hurt, who got killed, and stuff like that. But in moving up, in between the airfields, and I should have my map to show where it was, we hit a main defense line of Japanese. And we were moving ahead in our typical form; fifteen, twenty steps, zig-zagging down, and up, and out. And all of a sudden we got within, I don' know, fifteen, ten yards of a trench. And all of a sudden a whole line of Japanese got up and charged us while we were charging. And everybody shot. And you don't know who you hit or anything. But before I could fall down, I fell down next to a Japanese officer, maybe one, two, three steps down, and he had everything, pistol, samurai sword, so on and so forth, and I heard a voice behind me say, "Picks on that Jap." Well, when it was time to move out, I moved out, but I didn't take any souvenirs. I was tempted, but I still was resisting. Of course we moved on, and then we went back in reserve after another couple days. The only thing memorable about the second night in reserve was that while dozing off, probably a little deeper than on the line, all of a sudden there was a racket that I thought, "Oh boy. Banzai approach." So I looked up, tipped up my helmet, and I saw all kinds of shells and streaks going up in the air. "Oh, they hit an ammunition dump," went back to sleep. That's how blasé you get. And you know you--

Derks: Going back on reserve just means you’re off the line?

Chipman: Yeah, they pull us off the line a few hundred yards, and you're not right up on the front where it's one against the other. There was plenty of action back there too, because they infiltrated at night and so forth. I think one of the things at night--when you dug in you'd memorize every rock, every

twig, every piece of wood or whatever it was, every rise. And--because you had a probably a two or three hour watch, maybe twice a night, or maybe once if you had three guys with you. And if you fired at something, you gave away your position, you know, where you were. And you could get hand grenades if the Japs were close enough. But we would fire--not we, the artillery or the mortars would fire star shells and it would light up like day. You could see everything again just what it was. But when it came down, and faded, then the shadows moved. And you were so tempted to shoot at that shadow, you just couldn't do it. Another night experience I think that was interesting when the intelligence learned that there was a group of Japanese gathering for something or other or that there was a gun that they wanted out, they would call in Naval artillery, you know, 14- or 16-inch shells. And when they would land in front of you, I don't know, I couldn't even estimate how far, but they'd bounce you right off the ground, maybe ten--twelve inches. You know, that whole area shook when those big shells landed. So we, we'd move ahead a little bit each day, and we came up to the--I think it was the eighth day I was there, came up to the second airfield. And I don't know what outfit was on the left hand side, but we were on the right hand side and we were going down one of the runways and we're supported by five tanks. And as we moved down, one tank exploded and, you know, then all the tanks stopped and--I'm sure there was some rescuing of the people inside, some attempts to do it. But within a, I don't know, fifteen--twenty minutes, four of the five tanks blew up, while we were going ahead. And sometimes this late in life you think, you think "Jeez, did I really go through that?" Well, I picked up a book, oh, about six--seven months ago, called "Iwo Surgeon". And this doctor did not come in on the first day, but he was standing on the rail of a ship watching what was going on. And he saw the planes go down. And when he was moving with the group that was on the left-hand side of the airport, he saw the tanks blow up and he had it in the book. So, then, well I'm not crazy after all. And we moved down the airfield. It was mainly throwing hand grenades and--we'd cover the engineers that would have to go up with satchel charges, to close up a pill-box, or a cave, or whatever, or a flame-thrower, you know. We tried to lay down fire all around so they could go and get close, to do what they had to do. And, on the twenty-seventh of February, we came up to Hill 382. Now, there was an area they called the Meat Grinder, because they'd ground up so many people. One was the Amphitheater; they called one Turkey Knob, and Hill 382. And that's the one that our group was assigned to try to take. We never did take it, another outfit came in after a couple days, and they finally took it. But, there was a pill-box in front of us, we were coming in from the side and to the right-hand side there was a pill-box, to the left-hand side there was a cliff going up to the airfield. And there were five caves in there. There was cross-fire, so we couldn't get in. So they called up a tank, and I don't know how the sequence went, but I'm sure when the Japanese heard a tank coming in, that they pretty much pulled back, either

in the pill-box or in the caves, you know. And someone gave me two pockets of hand grenades and said, "Go close those five caves". And, I don't know, the yardage may have been fifty yards--sixty--seventy-five--I don't know what it was, but I ran up and threw hand-grenades in each cave. And the fifth one was just stacked with sea bags, Japanese sea bags, and I couldn't throw in hand-grenades so I emptied a clip of ammunition in there just in case someone was hiding. And I wanted, I didn't want to be alone, I was alone doing that. So, the tank at that time came in to the pill-box and it fired the flames in there, and I came back and as I ran across that field to get back with the people that we were working with the tank, I saw a roll of Japanese money. And as I ran I just bent down, scooped it up, put it in my breast pocket, ran past the tank and went up against the pill-box, because I knew as soon as the flames stopped they would send another crew of Japanese in there, you know, and they'd be shooting out. I didn't have that money a minute, and they started shelling the tank, and that's where seven of us got hit all at once. So--and real--real close to where we were, oh I don't know how far, I went back to the Aide Station, and I was hit in the left shoulder, and they took off my jackets and--the fella that was my Assistant B.A.R. man was back there having a smoke, and when he saw it he said, "Oh, you got a million dollar wound." It's probably worth more than a million to get out of there. And, so--they patch you up, you know, and the corpsman said, well, I was ambulatory, "You can walk back to the beach". So I was walking back to the beach, I couldn't see anybody on the path, trying to find my way, you know, there were no, there were roads and paths, but--And all of a sudden, one fella, I saw a helmet go up, and it was--one of our Mortar Sergeants, and he says, "How's it going up on the front-line?" And I answered him and kept on going to the beach. Got a little further and I heard some funny "whishes", you know, and I looked over on the side and there were rocket trucks--I should have a picture to show you, they're really. And I saw the fellas along with them dive to the side of the road and I did what they did, and they got, they pulled out, and the shells, you know, they can locate where the fire comes from and they, they shelled that area. But when I got back to the beach, to the beach hospital, the corpsman again looked at it, and it was about, I was hit at 4:05 and this had to be getting pretty close to dark and--so the wounded that had congregated, you know, at that time, they sent us back on a Higgins Boat to, the Hospital Ship lights up like a Christmas tree, and it pulls away from the island, you know, just before dark. So they sent us out to the *Indianapolis*. And they took us on, and they put us in Officer's Quarters. We were dirty and filthy and bloody, had our boots on and everything, they just put us between those white sheets, you know. And they gave us shots every couple of hours, I don't know what they were, Tetanus probably. The next day, well you know what happened to the *Indianapolis*, a day or two before the war was over. It was sunk. And I often think of the poor officer that gave me his bunk that night, you know. He probably was killed or sharks ate him or maybe

he survived, I hope so. But you think about those things, you know, you just--

Derks: Do you remember the sensation when you were wounded? What you felt?

Chipman: Yeah. I didn't hear the sound at all, of the shell going, but I felt it go through. But there was no pain that you would--figure would be pain, you know? You could feel it go through, and I knew I was wounded, and I didn't think of much except where was the Aide Station, you know. But--I didn't think about anything about getting off the island or how bad it was or, I just knew I needed help and somehow I knew where the Aide Station was. The next day and night, on the *Indianapolis*--they transferred us to a Hospital Ship. And if you could walk--you took a shower, you know, and then they assigned you a bunk and each day, morning, they checked you over, you know. I don't know what the sequence was but from the Hospital Ship they took us to Guam, we spent a week or two on Guam in a field hospital. I think they called it debriding when they, you know, took off your bandage and disinfected it or something, I don't, can't, don't really know. And then they took us, put us on an APA going back. Now, I'm getting ahead of myself. The morning that we, they took us to the Hospital Ship--and I'd taken a shower and I was looking out over the rail at Iwo and I could see all the explosions taking place. You know, that's what we were doing mainly is exploding caves and pill-boxes and so forth. And I could see that and--how you can have a mixture of emotions all at once I couldn't realize, but the first thing I though of was, "God, I deserted those--friends of ours," you know, our buddies who were still getting killed out there, and I thought, "Jeez," you know, "I deserted them." Then at, the realization came that--those so-and-so Japanese are, you know, to fault for all of this. At the same time I thought, "Man, I'm out of it." And then it just, split-second it all came and--I forgot something very important, I think. The second time we were in reserve, Clarence Eagle, another Indian that was a friend of ours, he came up when we were there and he says, "Compton got it." And that means he got killed, you know. And the--there was no hesitation to cry, you know, a good friend being gone and you always think of tough Marines, well--I guess they're not so tough when it comes to that. But then, the same thing happened in the hospital. 'Course we were taken to Pearl Harbor and all the naval hospitals were full so they put about a dozen of us in the Army hospital. And--we were put into a big ward of old men, twenty-one—twenty-two—twenty-three, that had ruptures and hernias and stuff like that. And, I learned a lot in that ward. For one thing, we all had nightmares for quite a while. I mean, you come out of there and for some reason you just--I don't know, we thought it was natural, normal you know. We'd wake 'em up, one would have it then the other one would have it, you know. Poor guys trying to get some sleep, you know.

But I have a lot of respect for whoever those fellas were, because we, the mail started to catch up with us. And, you know, the word got back who was killed, you know, and we'd get letters from home telling us so-and-so was killed, a buddy. [Pause] It was hard to think, and of course--some of us broke down and--but I admire those guys because they just ignored us, they didn't tease us, they didn't kid us, you know, they just--let us alone. [Pause] Well--getting' to an end, of this. We went in, well I was operated on to close the wound, you know, it was in the shoulder, the part that expanded, and the day they took the stitches out it broke open, so I was, they decided to heal it from the inside out and that took quite a while. It wasn't that bad, but it took a while. And I left the hospital, I still had bandages on, and my wife said it didn't heal over, you could see the muscle until 1954, and that's when our first daughter was born. And that's how she picks the date; it was, it was healed but it was like saran wrap over it, and finally the skin, but that's getting way ahead. We learned the routine. We were, the dozen of us were ambulatory, they put us on mess duty. We ate all their ice cream. [Laughs] That didn't last long. And we learned that--there was a routine. 10 o'clock or so in the morning the doctors would come through and they'd check your wound and treat it and then nobody paid any attention. You went to eat when you wanted to and you went to the recreation room or whatever. So a couple of us wanted to know more about what was going on, so we skipped out and we went to the Naval hospital and there we met, we saw people we knew, and that's where we learned what was going on, on Iwo, you know, first-hand information from those guys. Mainly who was injured, who was killed and so forth. We found out it wasn't that hard to skip out of an Army unit. We'd skip out--pretty regularly, but we'd, we'd go to other places in Honolulu and so forth. One day the Army officer that was in charge, he was waiting for us. And--he said, "I'm gonna have to run you up on charges, for, you know, absence without leave." And we said, "That's okay, we won't have to go in another battle then." He never, never said another word about it. But that's--a 18 year-old can get pretty callous, you know, in life and what it's all about. Well then—**[End of Tape WCWW2-171]**

Derks: Did you still have the use of your left arm, or was that demobilized?

Chipman: No. It was, as the corpsman said, a million dollar wound. Even though the skin didn't heal over for years, the use of it was not hindered to any great degree. And as I age now, then some things are coming back in there.

Derks: But even right when you got the wound, you were still able to use your left arm?

Chipman: Well I didn't but I probably could have.

Derks: Just hurt like heck, to move it.

Chipman: No. The only time it hurt was when stitches were in there. And there's, today, for years now, there's some kind of inner something in there that doesn't--it comes and goes. I just don't know what it is. I don't think the doctors, I've gone to three civilian doctors and then to the VA, and they've given me long and hard and tests and--my daughter who's a doctor said that probably there was some nerve damage in there. And, when certain things, movements--then you get it deep in where those nerves are.

Derks: You were talking about that first twenty-four hours, but even, you were there four days, thirty-six hours and three days before you came back to reserves?

Chipman: Yeah.

Derks: I just can't imagine the intensity of that. Not only did you not go to the bathroom and had very little time to eat--I can't imagine what that would be like.

Chipman: Well, I don't think we thought too much about it. The first priority is ammunition, the second is water, and if you can get food up there, you'll get food. But one important thing I'd like to interject, whether you use it or not is immaterial but, that D-Day was just horrendous, traumatically. But--our training I think carried us through. We knew what to do, and even though we were totally afraid or scared or whatever you want to call it, we knew what to do and we did it. And the second day going across that airfield was another instance where fear was just paramount, you know, until we got across. By the--by the ninth day, when I was injured, there was never a thought that I'd get wounded or killed or anything. It was more like, I still don't think I enjoyed it, but when I was told to do something I did it, and never had any concern about it at all.

Derks: Well I can see that. I mean, you going out there and dropping grenades into caves, and ready to go at the pill box.

Chipman: And what I'm telling you is probably minor compared to what other people have done. I know that when we go to reunions and--well, years ago we used to talk more about the battles, but now we're kind of over that and we talk a lot about other things, you know. But there were other people who did totally courageous things that--as your gentleman said before, that there were probably many men who should have gotten awards that didn't, and there are so many untold stories that--should be told. I tried, when I was Executive Secretary of the 4th Marine Division Association, I tried to get the fellas to write about the four battles, and I gave out tapes, you know, audio tapes, and I got a few back, but not many.

They're just--are reluctant in many cases--but you develop your philosophy as you go through life and--I think right now, what I feel is that our heritage has to be preserved so that people can use it to make judgments on.

Derks: Did you carry your B.A.R. the whole time?

Chipman: Yes. Until I got hit, and then my assistant--Everybody wanted a B.A.R. when they got on the island. They didn't wanna carry it in training, it was too heavy, but once you got there then the, the firepower--Of course, today they have the AK, excuse me, that's the one's they use against us, the AK-47--the M16-A2's, which are pretty rapid fire, three shots at a time if I know correctly.

Derks: You mentioned putting on your pack when you geared up, or suited up. What was in your pack?

Chipman: I think mainly extra underclothing and socks and toothbrush and--there was a blanket roll on it. Probably pen and paper and stuff like that, you know. Can't remember, we had canteens, usually had two canteens on our cartridge belt. Poncho may have been in there, but I don't think so, I think that was hooked on the back of the thing. I can't remember what was in it, it was so unimportant, we didn't need it. We needed a poncho for rain and a trenching tool to dig and a, the ammunition and the weapon and the water and that, the rest, the gas-mask and that, was kind of superficial.

Derks: What was the weather like in those nine days?

Chipman: It rained two or three times. But I was warned by the veterans, wear two jackets, you know. A dungaree jacket and a field jacket--don't just go in with one. And we got wet, but it, I never was really cold, I can think of. I do remember--it was sunny with puffy clouds on D-Day, and I would guess that it was in the lower ‘70s. And in '85 when we went back to put up a monument it was eighty-five also. So it--I don't remember being uncomfortable--lot of other sensations, but not uncomfortable.

Derks: I was wondering about that, when you said the guy jumped into the shell-hole with you and you talk. With that noise level, I mean, were the artillery and the explosions and the gun-fire going on.

Chipman: Not at that time.

Derks: No, not at that time?

Chipman: Well, the first day, yes. But I was thinking of the 3rd Division guy that jumped in with me, but the first day yes, it was hard to converse. But--and

I also remember that we'd wait for the shelling to slow down a little bit, and then we'd move, and when it picked up we'd stay down.

Derks: What did it smell like; just gunpowder?

Chipman: There was a different smell between the American ammunition and the Japanese ammunition. You could tell when a shell exploded what it was from the smell. I don't recall any--we must've smelled, you know, no showers, nothing. But I don't remember it, and I remember a day when three of us were requested to go, go up a draw to try and draw fire because they couldn't figure out where the firing was coming from. And they let us run about fifteen--twenty--thirty yards, and they called us back and when we went back we went off of the line and came back to where the, the officers and the sergeants were, or sergeant and so-forth, and they gave us a K-ration. And we looked around for a place to sit, and there was nothing except a pile of dead Japanese piled up kinda' organized way. We sat on them and ate our K-rations and I don't remember any smell so they must have been killed very recently, you know.

Derks: What a world you were in.

Chipman: It was a different world and it was a--at times it was frightening and--it was a world that, when you were out of it you were just overjoyed. There were a lot of things you could mention that would be--I guess you'd call it gory or so on. I hoped I stayed away from most of that, that was--whether it helps your story or not, but that was as gory as I wanna get. It was.

Derks: You mentioned the spider hole?

Chipman: Oh yeah, excuse me. We took turns doing the real dangerous things and when we called in airstrikes, and I say we, that's our--say battalion or regiment or whatever, and we get notice to put out the airstrips, and they were bright colored, I don't know what they were made out of, if they had plastic then or not, but they were bright color, and I can't recall whether they were yellow or orange. I would assume they were yellow. We'd have to crawl out fifteen--twenty yards and put them out in front of the, excuse me, our line, and then all the units were doing this, so then the pilots would know where our front lines were. And that was scary because--in front of the lines, nobody had been there, you know, those twenty yards. You didn't know whether there was a spider hole down there where there was a Japanese hiding in it or whether there was a, a cave on the side or something like that. I had to, I only had to do that once.

Derks: Why did you call it a spider hole?

Chipman: I don't have an answer for that.

Derks: Did it have a lid on it?

Chipman: Yeah, they had a lid on it, yeah. It was--the regular top-soil and whatever was on there and they'd pop up out of it, you know, open it up and come out and shoot you in the back after you left or whatever, so--did I mention the psychological change that took place, I think I did. The day I got hit, it was.

Derks: Oh no--when you were on the ship at the rail watching.

Chipman: Oh yeah, yeah, that was part of it.

Derks: What were the casualties like for, like your squad and your platoon? You told me a little bit about Company K.

Chipman: Yeah.

Derks: But of the guys in your squad that I assume you knew the best in your platoon.

Chipman: All I know is the nine days I was there and we, we received, I received three twice, so that was six. But we hit with about 240 men--when, on the beach, that was an approximate number. And then we got replacements, and I don't know how many they had. But I was told that out of that 240 men there were only three that landed D-Day that walked off the island. There were more men, but they were replacements that had come in. And some, some were wounded twice, you know. But the--there were 600 and, excuse me, there were 6,821 marines killed. There were a little over 19,000 wounded. And I'd have to go to the notes, to pick out--and it's interesting--just--I think the total, the total casualties on both sides was 48,000. And that came to a little over 6,000 per square mile. Iwo was four and a half miles long and a half a mile, and then there was, I guess, two and a half up on the broad end, and it was a little less than eight square miles. So if you add up the figures, we lost a little over 28,000 men, and that. I don't know what it comes to, but that's quite a few people. I think it's about 3,500 American casualties per square mile. And, as I said, if you added the Japanese in--Now, they never knew how many Japanese were on there. They figured, before the battle they figured that it would be a three to five day battle. Well, it took thirty-six days. But--different estimates, and that's all they are, between 20,000 and 23,000 Japanese were on that island, but that, excuse me--that doesn't tell you about the personalities and so forth.

Derks: Of course, everybody thinks of Iwo Jima, they think of the flag raising. Were you aware of the flag up there?

Chipman: Yes, that was on February 23rd, and we were in the line facing away. And they said it was, they put it, put the first small one up at 10:20, and I think within a minute and a half, two minutes everybody on the island knew what it was, and it was really a morale booster to look around and see the American flag flying up there because that meant nobody's going to be shooting at our backs as we move away from Suribachi. Suribachi was--560 feet high and it's, I guess the geological--thing going on today, it's going higher than that today, the formation there is rising. But it was, Iwo was 650 miles from Tokyo, and you'll find different estimates, but I took it off of a, a C-130 that I was on going from Tokyo to Iwo, and that was part of my having writing, having written stories for the newsletter and a couple of yearbooks, reunion yearbooks. I just wanted to know because there were so many different estimates. It was about half-way between Saipan and Tokyo. And that was why it was important. Because the Japanese were sending up fighters and just playing havoc with our B-29s, and I believe it shortened the war--by having that, giving our, our airplanes, our bombers free reign over Tokyo, practically free reign. Because they could--send--when we had it they could send Mustangs and Corsairs to accompany the bombers and fight off the, the attackers there.

Derks: All their planes were gone, obviously, when you landed. They got them out of there?

Chipman: They were blown off, but they, we did have air-raids coming in from Japan. And Admiral Turner took, let's see, the Marines wanted, I don't know, twelve--fourteen days of bombardment, and they only got three. And the reason for that was Turner took part of the fleet and the aircraft carriers up to Japan to combat them up there to keep the Japanese planes from attacking us while we were landing on the island. So, a lot of this I read, I didn't experience it, it was told in some cases.

Derks: Oh, I had a question that I was ready to ask and I lost it.

Chipman: I have a, while you're thinking--There's a book called *Top Secret*, just a little book, I don't know if I brought one along, but I could send you one, I got a copy of it. The Japanese, and this is more related to Okinawa than it is to anything we did on Iwo, and that is that they had enough Kamikaze planes squirreled away in Korea and Kyushu to send out 300 planes an hour to attack our fleet. They changed their philosophy from attacking battleships, you know, and cruisers and so-forth. They were gonna attack troop ships and get rid of the troops so they couldn't land. They had the same number of chitons, which are like our PT boats, with dynamite in the front. They could send for three days the same thing to attack our fleet,

and it could have been, the invasion of Japan, could have been disastrous for the United States. And that's why, getting a little political, you're gonna cut this out, I'm sure. That's why Truman allowed me to be here today. He made the decision to drop those bombs. We were training in the Saipan area. Between Saipan and Guam, there were five little islands that we landed with rubber boats, and we had to clear off radio stations and weather stations that the Japanese had. There were never many, just--so they could not warn Tokyo about the weather. See, if the weather was bad the planes couldn't take off and so forth so, that was just a side-line.

Derks: I remembered the question. I had read that nobody realized that the caves and the spider holes were connected to a whole network, and sometimes if the line passed a cave that you thought had been--did you ever get attacked or shot at from behind?

Chipman: No, I didn't. There were two nights where there was a lot of firing going behind us, and evidently that's what happened, they came back through the tunnels and got behind our lines and they hit the reserves. There is--by the way, there, some of the things I've talked about, the plane being shot down on D-Day, I have a video where it shows that big ball of smoke coming up, and some of these things actually have been taped, I don't know by whom. I would imagine that they were our, you know the Marine, the Marines had a corps of photographers and reporters along.

Derks: Yeah, I'll look for that, we may even have it. Where were you, February was--were you at sea at that Christmas of '44?

Chipman: No, no. Christmas of '44 we spent in, Camp Molly they called it. And we left on the 27th of, of January, 27th of December. I think I said January before, December. And then we spent a couple weeks in Pearl Harbor.

Derks: So what was that Christmas like? You sort of knew what was coming by then, didn't you?

Chipman:: Yeah, we were pretty sure that we were going out. They did--I do--Outside of the actual battle the Marine Corps fed us, I felt, well. The--I never went hungry there. And they would manage to get a K-ration up usually once a day. But I don't think I got hungry, I don't know. I think the situation was such you didn't really think about food too much.

Derks: How many could they carry at once? I mean, people just brought them up and went from.

Chipman: I don't know how many were in a case. I don't know. There had to be a couple dozen if--I don't think there was a gross in there, they would have

been pretty heavy. I don't know, I don't recall. But I do remember having to go back to the beach and pick them up once.

Derks: And then hump them back to the line?

Chipman: Yeah. And the water, the first canteens that we had was good water. After that, when we refilled our canteens, it tasted like gasoline. They used the, must've used the same fuel cans, you know for fuel, and when they were empty put water in them, probably rinsed them out, but you could still taste it so we didn't--I can't remember drinking too much water.

Derks: Oh yeah, 'cause they'd have to bring the water up to you too, wouldn't they?

Chipman: Yeah. Well, I assume we, we did get some of that in reserve, the choice that we were in reserve--that I was there.

Derks: Do you have a--in that first period, before you went back to reserve, is that all kind of a blur once you got on the beach, or?

Chipman: No.

Derks: If we went back through it would you remember it step-for-step?

Chipman: Pretty much so. Yeah, the--the real dangerous things are just, they're one hundred percent, you don't forget those. But I find that in my mind, the time sequence is not always on the right day of when things happened.

Derks: And before you get into that, what form did your nightmares take? Or did they even have a form, or was it just--

Chipman: Yes. It was, I didn't have a nightmare after, I had maybe one or two after I left the hospital. It was mainly in the hospital. But the alertness lasted until I got married, which was six years later. Nobody could move in the house and I was awake. If there was the least little ruffle, like my shoes touching before--I was awake. That stuck. Basically what it was, was--and I'd wake up at the same point. We'd be in a fox-hole, some of us, and it would be at night and the--Japanese, I don't know how many, would be coming up and over the parapet of the shell hole, or fox-hole. And I couldn't get my rifle up quick enough to fire, and that's when I'd wake up. But by that time you were--yelling, you know. But you don't, I don't know, I don't forget those things, and then other things, can't remember what I turned around for. [Laughs] I don't know, if I could glance through those notes I probably could come up with a few more things if you want to. **[End of Tape WCWW2-172]**

Derks: Were you going back in? Were they gonna send you back in or were you discharged straight from the hospital?

Chipman: No, no. We were sent back to, well from Hickam's Field down to the replacement depot, it's just a couple miles. And then they put us into a--a replacement area and they formed, there's a story about that too but I won't go into it. They put us into an MP [Military Police] company, they call it an MP company, but we were sent out to Saipan to do Provost Troop duties and train for the invasion of Japan, and that's where those five little islands came in.

Derks: So you were still in when the bomb dropped.

Chipman: Oh yeah, yeah. We were--It's interesting story also. On Saipan, Captain Oba, and he wrote a book, or someone wrote it for him, about the number of Japanese that retreated up into Mount Tapochau and they were living up there, I suppose, by stealing from the American troops that had different things there, big stores of stuff. And the Colonel that was in charge of us, he was gonna go up there, take us up there and, to roust them out. And I had been driving a Jeep, Officer of the Day and, Sergeant of the Day, and I didn't, learned how to use the radio in the Jeep and so forth. And when we were laying at the bottom of Tapochau waiting to, you know, charge up, I went back and was playing with the radio and we got the channel that the ships were on, on the other side of Saipan, and the news came over there that the war was, that the Atomic Bombs had been dropped and the war was over. And I just went and told the Sergeant and went up the line and they called off that. But months later, many months later, finally this Japanese Captain Oba came down and surrendered his men, would've--and he, we had probably 200 guys going up there and he had, like, 3,000 or something like that, it was just a big contingency of Japanese that were left. Then they--one night they woke us about two o'clock and they said, "Your whole--Pearl Harbor called and you fellas have enough points to go home." You know, we went home by the point system. And they put us on the *USS Breckenridge*, 6,000 soldiers, and about forty or fifty Marines. And you know who did the guard duty. The Marines caught the guard duty. And I--I was on compartment watch when we entered, or started to come into San Francisco, and the word passed around that we're going under the Golden Bridge, Golden Gate Bridge. And that was the only time I ever left my post, I ran up there, I was gonna see that bridge. And then we spent a few days at Treasure Island to get sort of processed and so forth. And then home to Great Lakes. And from, again it was a train trip with Marines, you know, there, there were no civilians in our compartment. And at Great Lakes they offered, if you wanted to stay a few days you could apply for Disability, and if you wanted to stay another day they'll fix your teeth and, you know. I turned twenty at Treasure Island and I didn't need any of that. I wanted to get home. And out of our

huge family, had one cousin who was married and she had a child, I don't know, maybe six or seven or in that age range. And she thought it was cruel that nobody came down after me, I had to take the North Shore back home. And she came down and--you know, to keep me company on the way home. Some aunts and uncles and my mom and dad met me, and we went to our house and my mother had prepared a meal for everybody, you know, and--I was edgy. Trying to eat with a lot of people in a small little kitchen, we were used to eating in the open in big mess-halls. And--oh, I said, I told you before that the alertness in sleep, it didn't leave. But we changed just like flipping a coin, our language changed and our plans changed, because we knew there were gonna be plans, you know, before we weren't quite sure. I wanted to play baseball. Well, first--I had sent letters from Saipan to Marquette and State Teacher's College in Wisconsin, you know, to go to school on the GI Bill. So that was coming up, and I wanted to play baseball and played locally and tried out for the Fond du Lac had a minor league team then. And things moved just as fast as when we went in, you know, so I think we adjusted rather quickly. You know, so--just total elation to be home and--see the people that you knew.

Derks: Was this Milwaukee?

Chipman: West Allis. West Allis, yeah.

Derks: And did it seem like it had changed any or had you changed any?

Chipman: There were missing people of course, friends that--you don't forget those things, you know, and, even fifty-eight years later. And of course--playing baseball with guys that we had known before and doing things with the family and going to see other relatives that came home and, you know, things changed awful quickly, you know, and I think, I think most people adapted to it pretty readily.

Derks: Were your teammates some veterans and some not?

Chipman: Yes, I think most of them were veterans, at least in the early years after we came home. We lost George Markovich on Iwo Jima. He was one of our pitchers and he was a corpsman, he was killed on D-Day, and Robert Theo, another fella--I went all the way through school, from grade school on, he was killed and--just a host of guys that didn't--in fact, after we got home, I, in West Allis, put up a monument with, where you could buy bricks for veterans, and I bought one for my dad and myself and went to look at them when it was finished, and there were only two guys I knew that were there, and I knew that there was a lot of 'em. So I started doing some research. I used twenty-six different sources to come up with 160, well, 164 or five, fellas from West Allis that were killed that either graduated from high school or left with an address, you know, that were

out of high school. And I went to the mayor, Mayor Bell, and told her what I had and what, what my concern was, that they weren't represented. And she says, "Well, I'll help you all I can but I can't get you any money. You'll have to get your own money." So I wrote a letter and asked her if she would sign it along with me and we sent it out to only seven places. And, believe it or not, we got enough money for having it installed and headline stones representing World War I, II, and Korea, Vietnam. And I can't remember--just how many total, I think--Well anyways, I don't know if you could use this or not, but this is some of the ways that you kind of think about these things and then something comes to mind. And we produced that Walk of Honor. A fella helped me, Art Antochee, was a Korean vet. Alice, my wife, did a lot of work. And we used Mayor Bell's staff for some things.

Derks: That's great.

Chipman: But, I went to school, played football, mainly went out for football, sat on the bench, but that was fun. Went out.

Derks: Where was this?

Chipman: It was Milwaukee State Teacher's. Yeah, I selected to stay home rather than come to Madison. I picked up, the Master's Degree says Madison, but--I got most of the credits down in Milwaukee. I think the association with the veteran's groups--and I don't think there's anything special about the people except we've had the same experience and we kind of think the same, along separate lines. And basically we're out to help people. For instance we recently organized a--treats for 2F24 that left for maneuvers. That's a Marine Corps reserve unit and--we put on a Memorial Day service. I've been chairman, since '85. I've been chairman all except two years, and we get speakers and line up the different parts of the program and--we, in recent years, not early but in recent years, I think many of us have realized that, “Hey, there's gonna be an end to this someday, and what we've done should be remembered and recognized and honored,” so we've gotten involved in putting memorial stones in Wood National Cemetery and one in the new cemetery in Union Grove. 'Course, we attend the reunions, Iwo Jima reunion and the Marine Corps reunions. And was Executive Secretary and I wrote the things I mentioned before, along, there's always help, you know, different people. And I was President for one year--it was '85, '86--and helped--been on the Board of Directors pretty much since, and nominating committee. Once you get active then you get to know who's doing what and they put you on the nominating committee.

Derks: I would think that you would have a pretty strong bond with anybody that was there.

Chipman: The bond is, especially with the people that were along side of you, is tremendous, I mean--I've had friends come up and stop over for a couple days. We've had some stay with us for a day or so and when we, we get a opportunity to go, like I belong to some, a group in Florida, we'll go past friends. We'll go a thousand miles longer because we wanna see certain people. And, believe it or not, my wife has--become extremely interested in this and--this bonding that you mentioned, "Esprit de corps," is what we call it, has gone on to the wives. And we stop to see some widows, you know, as we go different places. And if I went alone I probably wouldn't, but Alice knows these people so well, you know, from the reunions and so forth, and she, that bond is with, with that generation. But it stops with our children, our children have no interest in that.

Derks: Guess you had to be there.

Chipman: Pretty much so. But it indicates, too, that the ladies are a big, big part, and I recognized when we were Executive Secretaries and all the information came through us to produce the newsletter, that the women actually are holding these organizations together, because they're writing the checks, a lot of these fellas can't write anymore and, you know. And you're not gonna run away on a vacation from the rest of your family. So, and the women come along and there are things that the women can do, they organize for 'em.

Derks: I think we'd better let you go.

Chipman: Yeah. [Laughs]

Derks: Thank you. Thank you so much.

Chipman: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]