

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
CLAYTON CHIPMAN
Rifleman, USMC, World War II
1995

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Chipman, Clayton, (1926-). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 156 min.), analog, 1 1/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 156 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

ABSTRACT

Chipman, a Milwaukee Wis. native, discusses his military career serving with Co. K, 4th Marine Division, giving an exceptionally vivid and sincere account of the fighting on Iwo Jima as experienced by a front line infantryman. Chipman refers to homefront patriotism, enlistment, and his boot camp experiences. He details infantry training at Camp Pendleton, California, further weapons training at Camp Maui, Hawaii, division of new recruits into companies, and race relations amongst Marines. Also described is the importance of remembering Marines killed in combat, and interactions between combat veterans and Marines who had yet to go overseas. Chipman relates his journeys on the USS Londress, first in preparation for Iwo Jima, and then to reach Eneiwetok in the Marshall Islands. Chipman provides a detailed account of Iwo Jima invasion activities of the 4th Marine division, specifically his role shooting Japanese airplanes at Yellow Beach One, and later, storming the beach. Chipman describes three psychological stages he feels were key to Marines at Iwo Jima: believing Marines faced terror, preoccupation with orders coupled with physical carefulness, and the sensation combat was all a game. He also mentions rations, fear of banzai charges, superstitions, indirect air and naval support, friendly fire, night fighting, and the taking of souvenirs. He discusses his wounding at Hill 382, hospital experience at Schofield Barracks Amy Hospital, writing V-mail, and battle nightmares. He talks about joining the 5th MP Battalion (later 6th MP Company) and police duty at Saipan, learning of VJ-Day and the use of the atomic bomb. Chipman addresses his return home, use of the GI Bill, post-war work in Milwaukee schools, and participation in religious groups, the 4th Marine Division Association, Marine Corps League- Badger Detachment, Allied Veterans Council, and Devil Dogs.

Biographical Sketch

Chipman (b. March 29, 1926), entered the Marines on February 1, 1944 at age 17, and served as an infantryman at Iwo Jima. He was discharged at the war's end, and settled in Brookfield, Wis.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells.

Transcribed by Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs staff, n.d.

Transcription reviewed by David S. DeHorse and Abigail Miller, 200

Interview Transcript

Van Ells: Okay. Today's date is June 2, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Clayton Chipman, a native of the Milwaukee area and a veterans of the Marine Corps in World War II. Good morning, Mr. Chipman.

Chipman: Good morning.

Van Ells: Thanks for driving all the way in. You'll have to pardon my--

Chipman: It's a pleasure.

Van Ells: --crackly voice this morning. It's summer cold season. I like to start my interviews by having my subject tell me a little bit about where they were born and raised and what they were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Chipman: Well, I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on March 29, 1926 and only spent a few years in Milwaukee. Then my parents moved to West Allis where I attended school and presumably graduated from, as I, my mother got my diploma when I was overseas, so we got I think they called it a service diploma. When I turned 17 I started to bug my parents to join the Marines.

Van Ells: This was after the war started.

Chipman: Yes. I was in junior high school when the war started. It was on, of course, a Sunday afternoon. And my dad and I and brother were listening to a football game. That's how we heard about Pearl Harbor.

Van Ells: You must have been, what? Sixteen? Fifteen?

Chipman: When the war started. 1941, what was I?

Van Ells: You were still a fairly young guy.

Chipman: I was in seventh grade I believe. Probably 13.

Van Ells: When you heard the attack on Pearl Harbor did you think that the war was going to involve you at all? Did you have any inkling of that?

Chipman: My dad had joined, at 17 in World War I, and he boasted that the war would be over in six months. Like it was in World War I. I didn't think much about it. I was too busy playing football and baseball and basketball. And I don't

Interview Transcript (continued)

know, sometime around age 16 or 16 1/2 when all the reports started coming in about Bataan and Corregidor and, of course, Pearl Harbor itself, and Wake and Midway it started to get my attention. And, of course, the psyche or mind set in the United States in the early '40s was one of patriotism. I think most youngsters had some desire to contribute. I think a lot of things played in that age level there. We, of course, felt sympathy for the victims and by that time everyone hated the Japanese. I think that played something into a decision, you know, to join. And, of course, patriotism entered in.

Van Ells: So, when you signed up you were 17.

Chipman: I was 17 when I signed up.

Van Ells: You had to get your parents permission. As you mentioned before you bugged your parents. Did they resist your going into the service?

Chipman: My mother did. Finally, my dad said, "Well, unless you let him go you'll never be satisfied." So that was the pivotal statement and from then on the, it became interesting because we had to get papers filled out and we had to get them notarized, we had to take them to a police station. And, of course, I didn't have a police record but the chief said, "well, we'll wipe out your record." It was that kind of attitude. And when I went to high school I had to have the assistant principal sign the papers also. She pulled out my folder, she looked in it, and she said, "Oh, my god. They'll never let you in the Marine Corps with this IQ." She said, "Come on in. I'll give you a test and we'll see what you can do." So the test I took that day got me into college. But the explanation for that was they were foolish enough to put the football players together to take the test and, of course, nobody did anything except goof around, you know. But that was, and of course, four of us went down to enlist.

Van Ells: Four 17 year olds?

Chipman: Yeah, 17 year olds. Johnny Cook backed out when he saw how tough the sergeant was. I can't remember the fourth guy but he didn't go either. But Larry "Bone" Strasser and myself signed up. We should have known right away that the Marine Corps is different because they said, "Well, yeah, you can go together." Once we signed the papers, we were separated. And of course, Larry was killed on Okinawa in April of '45.

Van Ells: I was going to ask you why the Marine Corps. There were a lot of different services to choose from.

Interview Transcript (continued)

Chipman: Yeah. Well, basically, I guess I was, and still do, if you tell me I can't do it, I'm going to try like heck. Of course, the Marines were highly publicized and they were supposed to be the best and the toughest and that was a challenge. So I took the challenge. That's why I got in the Marines.

Van Ells: Was your father a combat veteran of World War I?

Chipman: Yes. He has a commendation from his captain for being in the 442nd Motor Transport Company and they were under fire for 77 days in a row. I still have the commendation and his pictures and so forth. He was not a Marine; he just supported the Marines by transporting materials up and so forth.

Van Ells: I see. Okay. So, your induction and introduction to the Marine Corps. If you could describe taking the oath, getting on the bus, going to basic training.

Chipman: Well, it was, for the reasons I explained before, it kind of, it was a challenge. The swearing in, as I indicated, should have let us know, if we'd have been thinking, that things were going to be different in the Marine Corps but we were eager, we were anxious. The excitement and the anxiousness and kind of being thrilled overshadowed the leaving home. I had, the furthest I'd been was to Chicago to see a Cubs game maybe a year before that, so everything was new. We stopped to eat in Chicago. We took whatever that line was, you know, down to Chicago to catch the train out. I can't remember the name of that line. But we stopped to eat and, I always have been a picky eater but I drank tomato juice which I'd never had tasted before and lot of new things were coming up. But traveling on the train, again, was exciting. We talked to everybody. One of the fellas, Calvin Canal from Milwaukee, a real excellent high school football player, we became buddies. I found that as you go to different groups, you immediately, there's something that draws you to certain people. Whether it's appearance or how they speak or what they say, I don't really know. Maybe a combination. And we got really close together. He was our traveling buddy. The things I remember most was when we'd stop in these little towns out west all the Red Cross ladies would come up with donuts and coffee and stuff. We had a great time. I can't remember being homesick at that point. And then, of course, as we arrived in California and saw all these orange groves, we had never seen an orange tree before and everybody got off the train and ran and picked oranges and go on before the train started again. I think the psychology that took place during that traveling was more entertainment and more new and you really didn't think about what was happening. You were kind of enjoying things.

Van Ells: A sense of adventure.

Interview Transcript (continued)

Chipman: Yes, yes.

Van Ells: Not to put words in your mouth.

Chipman: No, I think that was true. And for a youngster, you know, without any travel experience it was quite new. We arrived in Oceanside kind of late in the evening and two sergeants met us and they pretty much set us straight. They berated us and maligned us and badgered us and everything else that you can think of. It was their initial process of beginning to have you retrogress back to your base instincts. And what I was told many years later was that that was a deliberate process and once they got you down to where you were reacting on your instincts then they started to build you up into being what the Marines wanted.

Van Ells: Were they successful in this?

Chipman: I think so. I think so. As I relate this I'm sure that will become evident. The reason I'm talking about this is that I was old enough to remember a few Civil War veterans up in Fond du Lac where my mother lived and I was old enough, certainly, with my father who was very reluctant to talk about things and I think it was a mistake because unless you know history you're going to make the same mistakes over and over again. So I'm very willing to talk about it. Sometimes it's hard especially when you refer to like Calvin Canal who was killed on Iwo Jima with me, who was, again, one of our friends that we made during the train trip. The other thing is if you were there nobody has to tell you. If you were not there, nobody can tell you. So there's a big problem that exists and that is you try to paint a war picture or you try to use videos or slides or whatever to the senior group that we planned to show our Iwo Jima presentation to and you still try to get across some of these attitudes and feelings and so forth but--

Van Ells: But there's a limit to how deep an understanding someone--

Chipman: That's correct. I feel that's correct. It's like if you haven't lost a child, there's no way someone can tell you and if you, like the Gold Star Mothers, I refer to World War II mainly, there's no way that we can empathize with those people. We can say we do but until it happens to you. You still do not give up. You attempt to get across some of the basic ideas. You try to paint the word pictures, you know, if we possibly can. And hopefully by doing that the people who will be making the decisions in the near future will have at least some idea and all you have to do is look at our legislators now in Washington, D.C. They have taken away exactly 1/3 of the, not Bill of Rights but the GI Bill, and, in fact, there was one year where they took 11 things away. There

Interview Transcript (continued)

are, I know, that there are many questions that people have. Not only veterans but other people who associated with veterans and I presume that most people do. There are just some that are unanswerable from our experiences. There are decisions that are irreversible and some of these decisions precipitate permanent change in you. The lessons that you experience from an educational standpoint to you learn what you live and you live it to, you learn it to the degree that you live it. When you get into these areas where you're immersed totally into a traumatic experience and not, I'm not indicating that boot camp or anything was traumatic, the battle was. It just, it's indelible on your mind. You can't get it out. It's with you subliminally always. I assume that later on there might, something might happen to your mind like Alzheimer's and so forth which would eliminate that. But even though with these handicaps I've mentioned, sometimes you just want to say, throw up your hands, forget it, deep-six it. You learn in the Marine Corps a few minor deterrents don't stop you. I indicated before, I think the reasons why I joined the Marine Corps and as I indicated, the news reports had a very big effect on it, as the information came back later on in the war. Just before I went in, the Death March leaped out and so forth. I think that probably had a lot to do with a lot of people. I think in there one of the feelings was retaliation; you want to retaliate. Emotions played a big part. They always did through everything. I think another thing that played a big part in the youngsters who joined before they were drafted was the psyche in the United States. Everybody was doing their part. I can't remember anybody who wasn't totally patriotic and doing what they could do. And then as I mentioned before, some people like a challenge and that's the way they go. They want to see what they can do. When we got to boot camp and, in retrospect thinking back and all of these things were really lodged in your mind. I mean, maybe as a 30 or 40 year old they wouldn't have stuck, but as a 17 and 18 year old they did. And the psychological aspects of boot camp were they were just diverse, they were all-consuming, and they set in deep and they lasted to this day. Most people think of boot camp right away discipline enters their mind. My dad was so strict at home that when I went in the Marine Corps there was very little adjustment to what the DIs were doing. I just accepted it because my dad had instilled that into us. Thank heavens he did because a lot of fellas got into a lot of trouble because they resisted, you know, different discipline situations. Physically, in boot camp, I'd come out of high school and summer recreation and so forth playing football, basketball, running track, and baseball-- physically, there wasn't much of a challenge.

Van Ells: For you personally?

Interview Transcript (continued)

Chipman: For me personally. Other fellows had some trouble. As I recall, all of a sudden or maybe slowly, you become very hardened. Some of the things that they challenged us with was, of course, the obstacle course--and that was always a challenge and fun to beat your time and so forth and not have the DIs curse at you. Before breakfast they'd get us up and we'd run three miles in the sand, feed us breakfast, and as I said before, I'm a finicky eater but I never went hungry in the Marine Corps. There was always enough of things to eat. After breakfast, of course, you did calisthenics with the rifles. Those were the easy adjustments. One of the hard adjustments for me was that overcoming the fear of hand grenades, compound C, and the infiltration course where they fire live rounds over your head.

Van Ells: What is compound C? I'm not familiar with it.

Chipman: Compound C is a plastic dynamite. We had to learn how to form it, stick a match head in, light the end of the match, and let it explode, and things like that. And I had never held a rifle before I went and I had never fired a firecracker so you know what kind of an adjustment that was. We managed after awhile to overcome some of those apprehensions.

Van Ells: You had to.

Chipman: There was always doubt in your mind whether you could succeed in the things they were giving you. As you succeeded your confidence built up. It emerged, I found satisfaction in being able to do the things that were requested and some of the uncertainty left. At this point to talk about fear of battle or death or anything would be presumptuous because you're so busy with what you're doing you never even think of that at that particular stage. I can't really tell you when it set in at a certain day or a certain part of boot camp; it just all of a sudden that confidence built up. As far as the educational part was concerned everything was so new and different and our DI was a Tarawa veteran that was wounded. We had respect for him, you know, immediately. You know, a combat veteran wounded, you know, you just kind of look up to him. The hardest part of boot camp for me was staying awake in the sun. We'd sit down for lessons in the sun and it was hard to stay awake. The swimming with your shoes and all your clothing on and so forth, there was no problem there.

Van Ells: The basic lasted how long? How many weeks?

Chipman: It was eight weeks of boot camp. Two of those weeks were on the rifle range and, of course, we had to when they gave us a rifle, first of all after the first day you had to know your serial number--558657. When old Marines meet

Interview Transcript (continued)

each other the first thing they ask is what's your serial number. The second thing was your rifle number. And then you had to be able to take your rifle apart, clean it, put it together, and after a week or so you had to do it blindfolded. Those things were all fairly easy. You were always apprehensive that you were going to make a mistake with someone looking down your back.

Van Ells: If you did make a mistake, what were the consequences?

Chipman: Well, cleaning out the head with a toothbrush or walking around the compound with a bucket picking up litter that was forbidden, running around the parade ground with your rifle over your head. Of course, that along with close order drill every day for along periods, they developed a, well I think it was the attitude of response to directions and orders and I think they were just like Pavlov's dog; you adjusted and you reacted, you know, without thinking. And that's what they were looking for. They didn't want you to think much-- at that particular point.

Van Ells: I've got a couple more things about Marine basic training I'm interesting in. First of all, you mentioned your father was pretty strict so the discipline wasn't that much of an adjustment. I remember basic training and I've spoke with other veterans who have said the same thing and that is the language. I assume that your father didn't use some of the four-letter expletives and things like that?

Chipman: No. My father never swore.

Van Ells: Was there much of that in your training?

Chipman: Not in the training but away from the DIs and later on in the service the language was sizzling, foul. Of course coming out of service, going to college and becoming an educator, you had to flip over, you know; you had to do just the opposite. There's another thing that came out of boot camp and that was if one person made a mistake, everybody was punished for it. Out of that developed a confidence in each other. Nobody was going to make a mistake. The confidence was so great that before I ever even thought about the Marine next to me in battle bolting and running was 40 years later after the battle. I never thought a Marine would run. I saw Marines goof off that would leave the front line and go take a smoke someplace but I never saw anybody so afraid that they ran.

Van Ells: And you think the training and the team work particularly helped you prepare.

Interview Transcript (continued)

Chipman: Oh, yeah. Well, I think it was not only a reliance on everybody doing their own job but I think that you had pride that you didn't leave your friends down or your buddies down. That was part of it I'm sure. As much as, and I still hear today comments at reunions and so forth, "Oh, those so and so drill instructors." you know; they hate them. I didn't find it that way. In fact, I indicated this DI we had was a combat veteran from Tarawa and you could see the progression through, even as a youngster, I could see the progression. I didn't recognize what it was and I didn't recognize it was being done on purpose but I saw the progression. And from being tough and strict and hard and demanding after oh say when we're two-thirds through or so, that he became human. He would, when the lesson was done, he would sit and shoot the breeze with us about his battle experience at Tarawa. He would tell us about his girl friends and all kinds of stuff like that. I think it was on purpose. I think that was a sequence in there.

Van Ells: But this was after you'd been through training for awhile?

Chipman: Yeah, we were probably there six weeks or so. We were ingrained with what he wanted us to do. I think pride had an awful lot to do with your achievements because for instance on the rifle range you became attached to your instructor. You not only did it for yourself but you didn't want to let him down. It may seem strange but on graduation day from boot camp my greatest fear was I'd make a mistake and embarrass the drill instructor. There's so much that I suppose a guy should sit down for two or three years and just really knit-pick this down and he could come out with a pretty good psychological study. I never had the time to do that.

Van Ells: It would be very time-consuming.

Chipman: Of course, parade day, or graduation day, just everybody was so enthralled and we did a good job, of course. We, they never call you a Marine until that day and that's when they first call you a Marine. Otherwise you're a boot or any other names that they can think of.

Van Ells: After you pass the test so to speak you have the right to be called a Marine.

Chipman: That's right, you have to earn that right. Some youngsters did disappear. One fellow who in the first couple of days from northern Wisconsin, and I won't use his name, they called us out, the first night they didn't leave us sleep. They kept us up all night. Finally, about 3:00 in the morning they took us up in the attic of a barracks and let us sleep for a couple of hours and then they,

Interview Transcript (continued)

the first day, they issued all the clothes and gave you all the instructions and so forth. Well, after supper everybody went to bed. You know, they were really tired. Well, at 9:00 the DI came in and he called roll call. Called you out, fall out for roll call. This one kid wouldn't get out so he took a bucket of, the fire bucket on the tent -- you know there's a bucket of water in every tent -- and he dumped it on this kid. This kid said, "No more of this for me. I'll get out of here." He lasted a week. He urinated in bed every night and they sent him home. There's a lot of stories you could tell that you'd rather forget, you know. It gives you some inkling of how people respond, the range of response to what—

Van Ells: But that was fairly unusual.

Chipman: I would say that it probably--

Van Ells: Like in pilot training, for example, you'd have 30 or 40 percent washout rate. That didn't happen that frequently.

Chipman: No. We saw two--

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Chipman: We saw two people that disappeared. And they never told you why or anything. And the scuttlebutt was that, well this one fellow, we all felt that he was just totally sent home, discharged or whatever. And the other fellow went over the hill; he skipped out. And that became sort of common knowledge. But whether it was accurate knowledge or not we just don't know. But, of course, once that parade was over on D-Day everybody rushed to the telephones to call "wire me money to come home." We got a ten day leave if you wanted it.

Van Ells: And did you?

Chipman: Yes, I did. I found that after boot camp kind of faded in your memory another thing started to happen, leave and so forth. I started to have many unanswered questions. I wondered how could they in eight weeks build up so much pride that you're a Marine. The other thing was you learn to face whatever it was, whatever you feared, like hand grenades or whatever, and you learned to operate within that fear spectrum. The other question I have is how can they instill a relationship, a deep relationship between buddies. And I still go to see and have friends--and this is 42 years later. I just haven't found the key to any of those things yet. Of course, the unknown always challenges you and we

learned--how did we learn it? We learned to kind of adjust to the unknown and, you had to. The other thing is there were a lot of civilian priorities as we

Interview Transcript (continued)

had priorities in civilian life--they kind of became less important; they went to the background. There were other things that--and why, why could you do that? And I'm sure many other people had many other unanswered questions. But as we called home and, you know, they--I can't recall whether they paid us or not -- they must have paid us something but at \$21 a month how much did you get. So we had to call home for plane fare and I never realized until after the war that my mother borrowed the money to wire me to come home. There was another lesson, as we went on leave it was a revelation that servicemen were respected. I mean, they weren't spit at or cussed at like the Vietnam vets were.

Van Ells: As you're traveling around.

Chipman: As we're traveling or when we got home. I also realized that people forget in one hell of a hurry about a lot of things. When I left home, of course, I think most guys had a girlfriend--well, she lasted until the first weekend then she was out with a good friend of mine. We kind of learned that lesson in a hurry. But people were, they were kind, they were helpful, and they expressed their appreciation. I think it was a totally different situation than the Vietnam or even the Korean War situation. I think one of the main things that I think I began to learn there was how quickly friendships can bind into lasting and deep friendships. Not only in boot camp but on leave and so forth. Of course, after the ten days we had to be back. We were assigned to Camp Pendelton to what they called the line camp, which was an infantry training school. We approached; again, they always got us there at night. I don't know why. As we approached this particular phase of learning we had more confidence. I realized that we knew we could do pretty much what they asked of us. I think we understood things a lot better. The whole mental aspect was more relaxed and respectful to, you know, the new guys. I think it was more fun.

Van Ells: What sort of training did you do? Did you learn amphibious operations and that kind of thing?

Chipman: I'll get into that. As we went into Camp Pendelton we started a new camp. They called it Tent Camp 1. I imagine with each group they did the same thing to get you adjusted to going into nothing and building up. So there was no mess hall, so we ate in the tall grass, in the rain and water dripping in our mess kits. There was no bath facility so we bathed in a stream. There were no heads so we had to dig our own. And, actually, it took a couple of days and we had our tents up and it was just a regular little tent city going. I'm sure

they had their purpose, you know, letting us know hey, you can start from nothing and come out with a pretty comfortable situation. We did a lot of

Interview Transcript (continued)

things, a lot of work details but we were exposed to night problems, which I didn't care too much for. There were too many rattlesnakes in those mountains. And Pendelton was a big place. All mountainous. I think the two fears I had was snakes and getting lost at night out there. We learned how to handle machine-guns which we hadn't in boot camp. They took us out on amphibious landings with rubber boats. You could see sharks out there; they took us out that far. And then we'd come in to learn how to do that. It came in handy later on. Also, I was not much of a gambler ever but the first payday a big crap game got going. I was standing around watching and I didn't know how to play so there was a master sergeant there who was kind of taking advantage of the kids you know so what he bet I bet and I was able to send a little money home. But that went real fast. It was only three or four weeks there. We did get leave. We went up to LA, hitchhiked, you didn't have to stand on the road three minutes and someone picked you up, asked you where you were going, and take you as far as they were going. People were, in LA, I think they were overexposed to servicemen but they still were kind and we always managed to get something to eat and someplace to stay and so forth. I think it was on July 28 of 1944 they, you know, indicated we were going. They put us on the USS Ranger, which was an aircraft carrier. It was the first one that saw action in the war for the United States up in that sea up near Russia up there; they ran it to battles.

Van Ells: The Bering?

Chipman: The Bering Sea, yeah. They ran into fighting up there with the German planes and so forth. It was quite an experience. We slept on the hanger deck on cots. I slept underneath a Corsair fighter plane, which I'd never seen before. It was quite an experience. It would be thrilled you. We spent that time cleaning our rifles and we did exercises and we played up catch on the deck--every so often a ball would go over the side. But it was a pretty nice trip. It started--all the ships had libraries -- and I wasn't much of a reader. Well, with not much to do and I can't remember any gambling going on the ship, on this particular ship. There were others that I saw it but not here. So I began to read. It was really interesting. We saw flying fish for the first time. You know, you read about those things or someone told you about them and all of a sudden you're seeing them. What impressed me too was the brilliant teal blue of the ocean. It just was amazing. Of course, the Ranger was so big that I don't that anybody got seasick that I know of. Every new experience now, in reflecting back, I can see everything they did really had a purpose. And when you think

of the humongous size of the armed forces and how they could get all that logistical stuff in line, it's just amazing.

Van Ells: It is amazing.

Interview Transcript (continued)

Chipman: Amazing, yeah. Also, I noticed that aboard ship, that the officers were a little bit different. They were kind of more human I would say. They treated us a little bit different. Of course, we ended up in Honolulu, oh, Pearl Harbor. Then there was a replacement depot--they called it a transit center, a couple of names for it--but we were, there we were mainly on our own. There was nobody there to give us leis like once when we went over to visit, you know. We were given liberty in Honolulu. We went over to Waikiki to swim. Always managed to find someplace to get a hamburger, you know, or a little bit different type of food. But basically I would have to say that I was disappointed in what I had heard about Honolulu. In later years, going back there and seeing the Punch Bowl and the memorial, the Oklahoma Memorial, I guess--

Van Ells: Arizona.

Chipman: Arizona. Excuse me. Arizona Memorial. It was a little different sensation. But there, of course, we knew that, we didn't know. We didn't know what was going on. While we were there, I think this was probably the first real experience I had with scuttlebutt, there always were a lot of rumors but, and the scuttlebutt was that we were going to be replacements for the 4th Marine Division who were fighting at that particular time on Saipan and they were taking a pretty good beating. We figured, or the rumors were, that we'd be placed in line with the fighters. So we boarded a ship, we departed Pearl Harbor expecting to go down to the Mariana's and probably begin fighting on Tinian. When we woke up in the morning we were on Maui in the Hawaiian Islands. We were sent up to--on six-bys (trucks)--they took us up to the Camp Maui where the 4th Division was stationed, you know, in between battles. They dropped us off at different company areas in alphabetical order. So everyone that went into "K" company of the 23rd Marines either was a C, D, or E. It was, I suppose the most expeditious way to do it. But while the troops were out in the Mariana's fighting we just kind of cleaned up and straightened up the area and did a lot of playing and sitting around. In fact, when they talk about "gold bricking" I think they teach you how to "gold brick" to make the job last. Anyways, that was a lesson I learned that whatever a rumor was don't take it too seriously. Not that we were disappointed that we weren't--I suppose in a way we were disappointed we didn't get out with that group but it was better that way. So late in July of '44 we had started out as the 68th Replacement Draft and they changed the name to the 4th Replacement Draft and that's how we got assigned to the 4th Marine Division. During this time

before the veterans came back we built up some pretty good friendships and deep ones. In fact, they're lasting until today. I can't say much else about that period. It just was a kind of stagnant period. There was not much learning, not much doing. About the people we were with, I ended up, in our group of

Interview Transcript (continued)

about 10 or 11, 12 maybe, replacements from all over the United States--New Jersey, Florida, Midwest, we had 2 Indian boys--Compton, and I'll talk about Compton later--and Eagle. Eagle got hit in the eye on Iwo but he lived. There were French, Italian. We were just a whole conglomerate of nationalities.

Van Ells: And how did they all get along?

Chipman: We never even thought of it. Nothing came to our mind that, hey, he's an Indian or something. Or there was any difference. There wasn't. We were all trained in the same way.

Van Ells: What about ages? Where there a lot of--you were about 18 by this time.

Chipman: Yeah, I was 18.

Van Ells: Were there guys such as yourself or were they older?

Chipman: Yeah, I'm one of the youngest fellas that was on Iwo. We had, in our entire group, they were all either 17 or 18. But later on I ran into people who were in our draft who had children, were in their mid-30s and, I don't know--this is out of sequence--but when we went for a physical, of course, we went to an old factory building in Milwaukee and they gave us the physical and then at the end the fellas who passed they put in a room and we were all lined up and they said, "All of you who are enlisted in the Marines, take three steps forward." [END SIDE A, TAPE 1] And, of course, there were six or seven of us that moved and then they said, "Anyone that wants to volunteer for the Navy, take two steps forward." and a couple of guys stepped out. And they said, there was a Marine sergeant there, he said, "Well, I have seven guys. I need twelve. The guys who volunteered for the Navy -- you, you, and you--you're a Marine. Step forward." So men were drafted in the Marines and some older men were drafted in the Marines. But I'm sure that sergeant looked over that group and he picked out what he thought was the best physical specimens.

Van Ells: Best specimens. That's interesting.

Chipman: You know, as you talk about this all of a sudden things pop into your mind. I think the experience with the scuttlebutt, getting back to that, I think that helped your mental health because that was a minor experience that prepared

you for many further disappointments as rumors went around. We, you know, having several weeks before the fellows came back from battle, we did a lot of talking and sharing

Interview Transcript (continued)

of ideas and so forth but we were all proud that we were put into a battle group and not joining some outfit that never had any experience. It also gave us a sense of security that we would be with a group of veterans that knew what was going on. I think the basic reason behind that was that we knew the more we knew and the more experienced the guys were the better chance we had of getting back home. I'm sure that was the underlying reason for that. Our respect for those fellows that came back was instant and deep. We really had an affection for those people. It was extremely interesting to observe the reactions of the returning wounded. They came back and they wanted to talk about how they were hit and what would happen and they would share it with friends. And, of course, they accepted us. As we did later on Iwo, whenever a replacement came in, we were happy to have another guy around, or two guys around. They talked about the guys that got killed and they cried in some cases. And they expressed their appreciation. Oh, geez, I only got hit here and there'd be a big hunk of meat out of him, or holes, and so forth. You could tell that they were overjoyed that they made it through. But one thing that stood out, again, was the loyalty and devotion to their buddies and to the people that they lost. They talked about these people that they lost continually. I suppose it was some inner need that I don't understand. But even on the way to Iwo on the ships they were still talking about the guys they lost in the Marshals and the Mariana's. To this day I remember the names of men I never saw but they talked about that were killed. I can't explain the retention. I've got to read something four times to remember it but things like that, they just stick. I don't know why. That might be a study in itself. The battle veterans that came back they really took us under their wings and they shared, unabatedly, they shared everything they knew and they would tell us and correct us and so forth. Needless to say, we appreciated it, we respected them. And they had learned many lessons, which we still had to learn. I think their reason behind it was that they knew better than we knew that in order to survive you're team has to work together. I think that probably was one of the reasons but they probably had some humane reasons also. They probably felt sorry for us, you know, we were much younger--yeah, we were a year or two younger than they were. But that age thing was interesting too because anybody that was 21 was old and if you were 22 or 23, we called you "Pop." That was the relationship of our perspective of age at that time. But they really made us feel at home and they shared everything with us. In fact, our sergeant, Ray Smith, just a fantastic gentleman, older man--he was at least 22--but he offered me a bayonet to sent to my dad and I had somehow made a covenant with myself that I wasn't going to take any souvenirs and so I refused it.

Van Ells: Why was that?

Interview Transcript (continued)

Chipman: I don't know. Maybe it was superstitious. I don't know. And later on I'll get to some other souvenir stories, which probably saved my life. It just was something that I had decided myself, I didn't want any souvenirs. But that was one of the things they did. We gambled a little together. There was a lot of blackjack or some craps going on. I don't think at that time I realized why these people were doing that. I certainly was not aware of the appreciation that we should have had for the way that they treated us. And then on the flip side of that coin these fellows that were combat veterans, they would, if they knew somebody wasn't coming back, they'd cut open his sea bag and take anything they wanted. And when they went loose they just totally let loose, like on liberty and so forth. I mean, they really just let go.

[INTERRUPTION BY INTERCOM]

Chipman: So, evidently, the experience of battle changed, alters your morals and values to some extent and you become two different people. I'm sure the sharing and talking and showing and explaining to us about their traumatic experiences in the Mariana's had a definite purpose and I'm sure it was effective. And I think it helped a lot. You know, in education, your mind really, a vicarious experience to a real experience, once it's over your mind cannot really differentiate, you know, the experience yourself. You know but your mind can't tell the difference. And I'm sure that after training with these fellows and living with them for a few months there that, not in fact, but emotionally and mentally we were veterans because well, that's how you learn in school I guess. The pace was very lax the first two weeks that the veterans were back but once that two weeks passed, they stepped up the pace of training, they had group sessions and they talked about what happened and what they should have done and what they did do and so forth like that. They would talk about--it was uninhibited, it wasn't malicious -- but they would talk about the people who were courageous and those who were jittery and those that had battle fatigue. I really don't understand battle fatigue.

Van Ells: Still, to this day?

Chipman: To this day. I've written doctors, I've written generals. As I edited the 4th Marine Division newsletter for three years and I wanted to write a story on this because I never understood it because you go through different, I found, you go through different psychological stages as you hit the beach and so forth.

And I'll get to that later. It was interesting because the people who had battle fatigue in the Mariana's had it on Iwo. Maybe someone can, knows the answer to it but to me, before I left Iwo, it was more like playing a football game. It was fun. The first day, of course,

Interview Transcript (continued)

was no fun. But we went, and the training, to retrain the division after they gave the veterans chance to go on liberty and relax and so forth they came in with--one reason I think the Marines were successful and the Japanese weren't, first of all, our equipment was superior. But every Marine knew how to use a flame-thrower, a bazooka, a machine-gun, we worked with tanks, we just, they gave us a whole gamut of retraining. Of course, the veterans were bored; they all had gone through it. When the attrition in a battle, especially on Iwo Jima, was so great that you were working with strangers after awhile and you were doing things that wasn't your job but you did them because they had to be done. I'm sure that was the reason for training us in that way. The months between when the veterans came back in late August to oh, I think it was the middle of November, this training went on. We had night, overnight sessions camping out and so forth and it wasn't all work or all training. We'd make a campfire and sing around the campfire. One fellow by the name of Dale from Florida was a professional singer before he came in the Marine and he would sing for us. He had a wife and a child and on D-Day on Iwo in his Higgins boat the ramp wouldn't go down so he was the first one up and over the side and he was dead before he hit the water. A year ago his daughter put an article in our newsletter requesting information about her father and I happened to have a little signature of his and something that he said in my scrapbook and a picture of him so I sent it to her. And, of course, she sent back, "Thank you." But in the 50th year now, that has been a pretty common thing. People have been, all of a sudden the 50th anniversary, they want to know about their father, their uncle, and so forth. But that's a little side thing. But we really enjoyed his beautiful singing. In the training, of course we didn't know what they were doing but we would attack a certain area. Everybody got a chance to carry a Browning automatic rifle and after that one session they took my M1 and gave me a BAR. The only reason I could determine why they gave it to me was I was the only one that could hold it down on full automatic.

Van Ells: I've picked those up. They're fairly heavy.

Chipman: Yeah, they're approximately 20 pounds. An M1 is only like, I think it's 12, 12 1/2, something like that. But I believed the fellows when they said that was the best sleeping partner you could have in a battle. I was happy to get it and I carried it. People would, they would say, you know, on the long marches and stuff, "Do you want me to carry your BAR for awhile?" "No, I'll carry it." Well, anyways, all those things that we were exposed to--rifle, grenades--I

didn't mention those. That was another thing that was strange to us, the yellow attachment and rifle grenade. One of the interesting things was, well, I didn't go on liberty on Maui. It was the only time we had to play baseball and I'd rather play baseball than go on liberty so I'd stay back and I thought the

Interview Transcript (continued)

veterans should have the opportunity before we did. One night I woke up and I had an urge, a real bad urge and I walked outside and there was movement around in between the tent rows and every so many tents there's a 55 gallon of water with buckets, there's a guy sitting on that--

[END OF TAPE 1 - SIDE B]

Chipman: --they had, there was a line. Well, it turned out the next day they had fed us bad beef. And everybody had the diarrhea. But the cure was an eight march; they took us on an eight-hour march. That was the cure.

Van Ells: Did it work?

Chipman: Sure, it sure did. The other thing distinctive about Camp Maui in the interim between battles was that for Thanksgiving and Christmas we really had an outstanding meal. Turkey and all the trimmings, pumpkin pie, and whatever. And those were kind of the highlights of the eating. Otherwise it was pretty much standard. We had so much bacon today I don't even like bacon. Of course, Spam and what else did we have a lot of?

Van Ells: Chipped beef?

Chipman: No. I never, SOS, I still like that. We caught mess duty, this was an interesting thing, we caught mess duty, you know when the veterans came back and they're not going to give a battle veteran mess duty so replacements got it, and I ended up as a pot walloper. It was something, we did it because it was there. But one day our group, and you know we were all these replacements, we walked in the front door early, before the meal to do whatever had to be done, and there were two big vats of half peaches sitting there ready, which was I suppose a dessert. But boy we were eating three or four apiece. And the mess sergeant came out and he saw us and he said, "What the hell do you think this is? The USO?" And that was the last day we were on mess duty. They changed groups. In mid-November, I don't know just what the date is anymore but my records, I have my records. If you need a date, I can look it up.

Van Ells: In your records somewhere.

Chipman: Yeah. But mid-November, it was the 15th--I took it off my records; it's right here--we boarded the USS Londress at Kahoolawe Territory of Hawaii and we participated in regimental maneuvers in Mahila Bay, you're going to need that spelling, and we went through all the things that you would go through just on

Interview Transcript (continued)

D-Day and, of course, we returned to camp four days later on the 19th. After that we got a little break. We'd march to see a football game, kind of more enjoyable things. Each Sunday we had time off to go to church if you wanted to go. As the time went on attendance in church increased and it became a more comforting experience to me. The closer battle became imminent to us I think that's where the worship reached its apex and, of course, on D-Day and during the battle -- and another story -- that was another religious aspect of it. I think I'll talk a little bit more about that later on.

Van Ells: Okay.

Chipman: On the 31st of December we re-embarked on the USS Londress and we sailed on the 1st of January of '45 and we had exercises at that same bay and on, we stayed aboard the ship and on the 18th we landed in Pearl Harbor. We stayed there from the 19th through the 26th in Pearl Harbor and we had liberty quite a few times going into Honolulu. One of my experiences--

[INTERRUPTION BY INTERCOM]

Chipman: One of my experiences there was in the USO; they had a book and people would sign the date they were there and the ship they were on or where they were and I found Ralph Schubert, one of the kids I played football and baseball with on a battleship there. So I left a message in there and the next time we were on liberty we met and we had a good time. He took me out to the battleship. I can't remember the name of it.

Van Ells: I was going to ask what it was.

Chipman: I couldn't tell you. I'd have to talk to him if he's still alive. He showed me around the battleship and we had supper. They had little boats going back and forth and they stopped at a certain time and I overstayed the time. We went up to the officer on deck, you know, and told him the situation and the next Higgins boat that went past he blew the whistle and he said, "We have a Marine that has to get back to the USS Londress. Can you take him over?" "Yeah." And they took me over so I wasn't AWOL. It was just, you know, a true pleasure to meet somebody from home and be with him for a few hours. It was just a thrill. That's how we spent the time in Pearl Harbor. On January 27 we sailed for Eneiwetok in the Marshall Islands. On January 25 my high

school class as West Allis Central graduated and I was out in the middle of Pearl Harbor there while those kids were graduating. My mother got a, I think they call it a service diploma, don't they?

Van Ells: Yeah, I think that's what they call it.

Interview Transcript (continued)

Chipman: So, on the, I was trying to catch the date that we sailed from Pearl Harbor but I must have missed that. Anyways, on the voyage to Eneiwetok we held classes, a lot of classes. We exercised, we studied a relief map of Iwo Jima. They didn't tell us where we were going until we left Pearl Harbor, of course, and then they brought out the big relief maps and we studied relief maps and regular maps, and what our assignment was, and where we were going to land, and all that. Very detailed. I don't recall any gambling on the way to battle. There probably was but I didn't see it. We washed our clothing by, we'd run a rope through the sleeves and through the leg of the pants, we'd tie a knot and throw it over the back of the ship and that was our laundry. Otherwise you didn't get things clean. There was no laundry. And the showers, we didn't get a fresh water shower all the time we were on that ship. We spent a lot of time talking mainly about home and girlfriends and whatever with our, again, select buddies. The food on the ship was good except for Wednesdays; every Wednesday it was beans. I didn't care much for beans. The most frightening part of the travel was when there would be a submarine alert and I suppose it could have been a whale, it could have been a submarine, one of ours maybe, who knows? But they would lock you, you know, secure to quarters and they'd send all the troops down and lock the hatches and that was nerve-racking. The real recreation was every afternoon there was a boxing on one of the hatches and the funny part of it was there wasn't much boxing between sailor and sailor; it was friend and friend. And we'd be talking to somebody all morning and exercising with them and in the afternoon go up and fight them. After we got done knocking each other around we'd come down and be talking; it didn't mean anything. That's mainly the way we spent our time. And, of course, in this particular situation, again, I started to become an avid reader. The ships all had, they had excellent books, I'm sure. I didn't read all excellent ones. I read the, let's see. Oh, on the ship, too, as it got close to the Mariana's--we anchored at Saipan--and we didn't have anything to do there. It was a brief period of time and we had a mock landing on Tinian, which is only three miles from Saipan. The second maneuvers in Hawaii and this one was a full division maneuver, otherwise it was just a regimental maneuver. So we were anchored at Saipan and when we left Saipan--I can't recall the date, it had to be somewhere around the, oh, the 15th or so of February--and on the way up our Sergeant Smith again, I'm sure he did it to everybody but I don't recall him doing it except to me, he took me aside and he reassured me that we were capable, that he had been watching us, he knew that we could do the job,

and he asked all kinds of family questions. And I'm sure it was to relax us, you know, and take our minds off of things. He also asked if I was afraid. And I had to immediate answer. I had to think about it and the only way I could come up with a logical answer was I was not scared but I was afraid. I think scared is uncontrolled; afraid, you know it's coming, you know darn

Interview Transcript (continued)

well that you should be afraid and if you weren't afraid there was something wrong with your marble upstairs, I think. Only a fool would not have been afraid knowing what the situation was coming up. That was one of the later experiences. I think we were as well prepared as we could be; psychologically and mentally and emotionally and, certainly, physically, we were just drilled to death and physically, even on the ships, it was always exercise. I think, now after Iwo, I was in six little -- oh, they've got a special name extending the authority of the United States to these little islands--but I think if I'd have been in a major battle, I'd have been a heck of a lot more afraid the second time than I was the first time. We weren't quite prepared for what was coming. The sergeant, and I'm getting ahead of myself, but wherever, the nine days I was on that island, whenever I looked up, and a lot of times you didn't look at anything but black sand, you had your head down, and whenever I looked up you could see his helmet. I always knew I was okay then. He was very, I think he was one of the most courageous guys that the Marine Corps ever had. Again, getting ahead of the story but talking about Ray Smith, several days after I was hit he was talking on the microphone of a tank and directing fire and some Jap shot him right through the head. He was, very sad situation for us. It gets us up to D-Day. D-Day began for us about 3:30, right in that area, with a breakfast of--well, of course, reveille--and a breakfast. We had, on our ship we had steak and eggs, whatever you wanted they had it. It was just a glorious meal. I don't know whether going into battle anything can be glorious but it was an outstanding meal. Right after we had an opportunity to go to church and take the Lord's Supper, communion. Here the attendance was just overwhelming. I think just about everybody went.

Van Ells: Just out of curiosity, not to interrupt, but was it Catholic and Protestant?

Chipman: Ecumenical.

Van Ells: The whole _____ was together.

Chipman: Group. Yeah. I have some other stories about that which I'm not going to talk about but as I wrote seven yearbooks for the 4th Marine Division people have sent me tapes and so forth and I have some stories but I'm just talking about our outfit right now. Right after that we went back to our bunk area and they called it "saddling up" and we put on our gear, our packs, and so forth

and we were issued ammunition and grenades and what they called a battle ration--a little more sophisticated than K-rations. As we lined up in the bunk rows, each squad in a bunk row, they gave us a few last minute instructions. We left that area and we went to an assigned area on the ship where our Higgins boat or whatever they call it when they hang it up there, and then we

Interview Transcript (continued)

waited there for the proper time. There was, I can't remember any talking at all once we left the bunk area. I think guys had their own thoughts. When the word was given, of course, we went up and over the side with 85 pound pack and a BAR, ammunition, canteens. We had to leave our packs un-strapped and our helmets un-strapped. In case we went in we'd have a chance to get rid of those anyway. We went down that cargo net and, of course, the day was February 19 of '45 out there was a few fluffy clouds and it was pretty pleasant temperature -- I'd say in the low 70s--but the swells. The swells were they said 16 feet high. I don't know whether the boat rose, sank--the Higgins boat, you know, along side the big ship--rose that far but we had one fellow break an ankle when he got off at the wrong time. That gets us to the Higgins boat. At this point we were doing things automatically. I don't think there was much real thought going into what you were doing except you were being cautious. The brass, the officers, had told us that they expected a three to five day battle, that the island had been pounded for 74 days by B-24s and B-29s and they didn't see how too much could be left. Once we got in the Higgins boats then the companies, you know, they circled, rendezvoused until the signal boat--there was a signal boat there, ship, whatever--that would give you the directions. They'd call you in over, they had radios, and they'd call you, "K company, come to the line of departure" and so forth. Anyways, we were out there real early. One of the experiences that I remember was being very close to a battleship when they fired their 16-inch guns. That was horrendous. The noise and the shock was just. And we weren't that close, maybe 100 yards or something like that from it. But we found out that there was some power in those guns. As we, well, I didn't find this out until a mini-reunion maybe 15 years ago--Art Forbes who was the runner for our Captain Wagner, he said, "Captain, you remember" he said "about 9:30, 20 to 10"--now the first troops landed at 9:02--"Major Scales called and said you better come in. Thinks are pretty bad here." Well, in the literature if you read it today, they say General Kuribayashi held back. Well, he did hold back some but it was bad enough 30, 40 minutes after they landed to call in the next group of troops. So we went to the line, but before we got to the line of departure the lieutenant asked, he said, and the Japanese still had air force then and they were sending planes over, he wanted volunteers on each side of the coxswain in the Higgins boat--there were two 50-caliber machine-guns and he said, "I want two volunteers to take those machine-guns and watch for Japanese airplanes." and it was a long time before anybody responded. Finally, a corporal called and said, "Well, I'll take one." I just thought to myself, well,

someone has to do it and nobody was stepping forward so I said, "Okay, I'll take the other one." so I handed my BAR to a friend and I went up there. I think it was a wise decision because, for several reasons. First, I was up there; I could see what was going and I could see that beach, I saw Mt. Suribachi over on the left, and the billowing smoke and sand and stuff just rising

Interview Transcript (continued)

hundreds of feet in the air. And I didn't know the word "panorama" at the time; I don't think it was coined at the time. It was just a panoramic view of the entire coast. It didn't sink in that Marines were getting killed at that time and Japs were getting killed. While I was watching and, of course, looking up for airplanes, I saw a Corsair come down along the beach strafing the first air field and never came out of his dive. He just went and I think he was dead before he hit the ground. There's a picture of his plane, well, you can't see anything but a big billow of smoke coming up--black smoke--as it exploded. A few minutes later--now, this, we've left the line of departure and we're going into Yellow Beach One--I'm watching, I see another plane over the north end of an island and I recognized it as a PBV. I didn't realize there were 10 or 15 models of PBVs but anyways, I'm watching that plane and all of a sudden the tail dropped off of it and that plane went right down. A few minutes later a little observation grasshopper in the middle of the island was shot down. All of a sudden it dawned on me, hey, there were no parachutes. You know, Americans were getting killed. About that time or maybe a little later, all of a sudden I could hear some funny noises. You know, zing, zing. And then a couple of thuds on the front of the Higgins boat and our sergeant says, "Fellows, come on down. There's no use being a shooting duck in a gallery for them." He said, "Come on down below the plating." they had, I guess, a little steel plating along the sides in front. So we went down there, left those machine-guns. About that time I thought to myself what the hell am I doing here, what am I doing here, well. All of a sudden dawned on me, hey, something's going on that isn't actually what I like. As the boat hit the beach and the whole front of the Higgins boat goes down, and everybody rushed off because a boat's a bigger target than an individual, you know, and there was a lot of firing going on. The first thing, even before I hit the black sand, I saw three rows of dead Americans, dead Marines. That was my first view. My second view was the black sand. As we got off there was no wreckage apparent, you know, as you glance to the side so it was early in the battle because a few hours later it was just a total junk yard. You know, jeeps, and tanks, and Amtraks, and guns, the bigger guns, you know, and stuff. We hid in the first hole that we could, you know, guys spread out like they were taught to do and hid in the holes. Now, we hid in the holes because, for several reasons. One, it took you below the surface of the beach. Two, where a shell exploded the mines explode. So we'd go from hole to hole, you know, hoping that you wouldn't hit a land mine in between. It was a struggle to move. You couldn't a foxhole because the volcanic ash came right back in and the load

that we had -- one of the first things everybody did, including myself -- was throw our gas mask away. That was the least of our things that we needed at that time. Of course, another thing that impeded us was the noise of shells going over your head and bullets going over your head and explosions. The noise was relentless. You can't imagine the noise unless you were there. This

Interview Transcript (continued)

thing in Oklahoma City, those people, that must have been there first awareness, you know, that horrendous noise. That's one of the things that impressed me. It's just incomparable. I tell my wife at the finale at the fireworks, well, this is probably 1/50 of what it sounded like down there. It took us from, I would say we hit the beach at 9:40, 9:45, took us until 4:00 to fight our way up to the edge of the first airfield. On the way one of the things I saw was a Marine with his leg shot off; only one strip of flesh holding this leg. He had to bleed to death. And, of course, in a situation like that with so many guys getting killed and wounded the corpsmen couldn't get to everybody. Probably nobody stopped to put a tourniquet on or something. The next guy I saw in going, you kept your head down pretty much looking for, if you could see any Japanese which we saw very, very few but you always knew where the pillbox is and things--the machine-guns were pretty well knocked out by then--but the pillboxes, of course, they had caves, tunnels and you throw a sachel charge in a pillbox and you'd kill the Japs that were in there but a few minutes later more would come up through the tunnel so you were always looking for that. Then I saw a third Marine and no apparent wounds at all, dead as a door nail but no apparent wounds. Oh somewhere around maybe 11:00, 11:30 in the morning someone jumps in the hole with me--I was alone in a shell hole--and had two canisters of machine-gun ammunition, dressed just like a Marine and, of course, the first thing you talk about is what outfit are you with. This was a Seabee, and what the heck they had Seabees on that island at that time when the Marines couldn't even move, what could a Seabee build up? Anyways, he stayed with me the rest of the day and when we got up to the edge of the airfield our group was happy that he was along. It was one more man. By that time 30,000 Marines were on the beach. The realization struck me at that time -- I hadn't thought about it before -- of course I was aware of it and I was thinking about it -- but it struck me that I was praying constantly, constantly praying. Once we reached that airfield and we set up for the night, not many people ate. In fact, I ate my battle rations and someone gave me theirs. I guess all you can do is attribute it to stupidity. I was hungry and I was one of the few guys that slept, you know, when I wasn't on watch. I was able to go to sleep that night. But the only talking, again, the only talking was of who got killed and who got wounded. There was nothing else. I don't remember much about that night except that we looked out over the airfield continually trying to see movement. We expected a banzai charge which, of course, Kuribayashi didn't believe in. He believed in a defense at depth and extracting most due that he could out of the

Marines. The next morning D plus 1, or February 20, the thoughts were, "God, is today going to be like D-Day?" Total exhaustion, terror, unrelenting, unimaginable noise, the dead and the wounded, and praying. In all that trauma, we were doing what we were taught to do and that was one of your questions, "How was your training?" I think this was just the statement I

Interview Transcript (continued)

could make was that our training carried us through or we would have fallen apart, I'm sure. The nights, actually one of the problems, you remember vividly everything that happened but the time sequence gets scattered around. When you go to a reunion and you talk to fellas all of a sudden things start to fall back in line, you know, time-wise. I think talk a little about the night on Iwo. Many people have said that as the sun descended they were thankful for another day and then immediately they prayed for strength and safety and for morning to come because nights were the worst time. We would memorize every rock, every bush, the few that there were, every little raise, you try to memorize it. When the star shells would go up from mortars or from ships and it would light up the area like day but as they came down the shadows would change and you'd swear that rock was crawling. But you had to have, you had to use every ounce of restraint that you had to keep from firing at it because you knew if you fired then the Japanese knew where the line was and they'd start lobbing in mortars. While you were on watch, boy it was just a nerve-wracking situation. The other thing, and this may hurt someone's feelings--I don't give a darn whether they do or not--but another irritation was that you're always strung out in a line and fellas have to smoke. So at night they would put their poncho over their head and they would light up a cigarette. Well that, the poncho stopped the light but not around the edge. People wonder why the Japanese always knew where our weak spots were. That was it. You might as well give them a map because all these guys were lighting up their cigarettes. They knew exactly where we were. And they knew where the division between the units were and that's where they'd hit. I never had much use for smoking because of that. I'm sure guys got killed because other guys smoked. It's just ridiculous. On the second morning, the 20th at 0800, K company, K-323 of the 4th Marine Division, we jumped off with the rest of the division to go across the airfield. We had a wheel, that's making a right turn because the 5th Division was attacking Mt. Suribachi and two [TAPE 2 SIDE A BEGINS] of their regiments were attacking alongside of us, and as we started across that airfield--you never run far and you run zigzagged--you may run 15, 20 yards and down you go--well, when their machine-guns opened up on us I tried to get in a hole about the size of a golf ball on the airfield. You know, airfields are pretty hard. You don't dig foxholes. When some of the bullets tore through my pack I decided I didn't need my pack anymore; it was too big of a target. So I kept two things, besides the water and ammo, poncho and trenching tool; that's all we needed. The rest was just left there. I'm not the only that threw it away. Of course,

then you could move a little bit better also. It took us all day to cross that airfield. Not so much to cross the airfield but when we hit their revetments they had machine-gun nests and pillboxes built into their revetments and we threw hand grenades all day, we used satchel charges and flame throwers and, of course, as a BAR man, it was my job to fire into the aperture or the opening

Interview Transcript (continued)

while some Marine would crawl up with a satchel charger. The guy would go up with the flame-thrower and that's what we did all day until the second night. Of course, you were continually being shelled from two sides of Mt. Suribachi. They were above you, the koi they were above you and in front of you. They're above you so it was like shooting Marines--it was like going to the circus and shooting fish in a rail barrel. How anybody got across that beach is just -- the only answer I have for that is the Lord was with a few people. That night, because I had an automatic weapon, I was put on the end of the airfield in a Japanese gun emplacement. They had dual pom-pom guns for antiaircraft and, of course, other purposes. That night I was in the hole with two of my friends and we talked about the 23rd Psalms, was religious.

That night we

talked a little bit. Every couple of minutes the Jap's artillery piece would hit the bottom of the hill--we were up and the airport was built up above the rest of the land, maybe 40, 50 feet--and then the next shell would go over our heads. They must have had that artillery piece registered in so that it missed their gun emplacement and one would be at the bottom and one would be over the head. We didn't sleep at all that night because, boy, one would hit down there and then would go zoom, you know, over your head. That's how the second night ensued. We were lucky to get one K-ration a day. First priority was ammo and second priority was water. And if they could get food up they would get some food up to us. As we left the first airfield, Motiatima #1, each morning we'd attack someplace around 0800, 0830 and we measured progress in yards, a few yards. Their pillboxes were supported by machine-gun emplacements. One blockhouse would cover a pillbox and they'd just be covering each other; they're intersecting fields of fire and that's what we had to get rid of. If it wasn't a pillbox we were attacking, it was a machine-gun, or a trench, or a cave. One of the incidents in that few days as we were going between Motiatima #1 and #2, I got excited once and I just shot a whole clip of 20 rounds at once and ducked down back in the shell hole and no more than 30 seconds later, you know, as a shell explodes it makes a soft arch of dirt along the side. A mortar, Japanese mortar shell landed in that soft dirt and it was a dud so you knew the Lord was watching over me. You can't make a mistake. I mean, I made a mistake and I got away with it only because the Lord was with me. On the fourth morning we were on the line and it was still dark and I had three replacements with me. I was sleeping at the time and someone jumped on my head and it was another Marine. Of course, you had your helmet on; you don't take your helmet off for too much in a battle. It was

another Marine and he apologized. Evidently the Japanese saw movement and they opened up with a machine-gun and this kid jumped on me and, of course, well, what outfit are you with? Third Division. So we knew that the 3rd Division has reinforced us. Before it got light their 3rd Division men moved through our lines and attacked and then we went back to the beach for a rest. After three or whatever it was, three days in the line and not sleeping much at night and not getting much to eat. So we went back to the beach for a rest and one of the first things that happened was Bill Compton, I mentioned before, Indian boy from Oklahoma, he came up looking for me and he says, "Oh, man. This is great. They hump up just like a deer when you hit them." and we talked for awhile and then he went back for his outfit. Well, the next time I heard about Compton he was what we'd call a "warrior" not a Marine. There's a difference between a warrior and a Marine. A warrior loves to fight, a Marine is just there because he's patriotic I suppose, or something. Anyways, he was the first guy to charge in a morning charge and some Japanese was laying a few yards in front of him and shot him through the groin so we lost a dear friend. During that, now this is the fourth day and we haven't gone to the bathroom at all and I had to go to the bathroom so I asked this sergeant, I said, "Sergeant Smith, where's the head?" He said, "Find a shell hole and take your shovel with you." and so I went over and did that. When I came back they were distributing what they call 10-in-1 rations; half peaches and each guy got one or two of them and we had strips of bacon. I think we each had ten bacons. I took the bacon, I asked the sergeant, I says, "Where do we fry our bacon?"; they had a fire going, I said, "What do we use to fry our bacon in?" He said, "Use your shovel." So your shovel really came in handy for different things. It was, we were shelled every so often, you know, they shelled the beach the whole time. When the night came instead of having every other guy awake we had like one in four guys awake because we were back off the front lines. All of a sudden, and you sleep with your helmet on, you don't take it off, and all of a sudden there was one heck of a racket and I, oh, boy, here's that banzai charge they're always talking about. So I tipped my helmet and looked out and it looked much greater than any Fourth of July you've ever seen. The Japanese hit an ammunition dump. My reaction, and we were maybe 75 yards away at the most I would say, being generous, I looked at that and I thought oh, ammunition dump, and I went right back to sleep. You don't sleep. You're in that hazy. You're aware of every noise that goes on but you're still not one hundred percent awake. So that was our rest and relaxation in reserve. But before dawn we were up and back, they took us back in the lines before light so that we wouldn't be shelled as we--anytime that you get a group of people together they're going to shell or if an automatic weapon goes off, they're going to put mortars or something on it. So we moved out. Again, we hadn't gotten to the second airfield yet. We were ordered to move out, and I think this was sometime around mid-day-- incidentally it rained off and on several days which made it that much more miserable--we started to move out and, of course, you're up and you're

running and you're down and you're up and you're running and you're down. When we hit the main Japanese defense line between the two airfields a Jap officer in total dress uniform and his men got up and they charged at us. I think you'd say if you were a hunter, that they flushed. Of course, everybody shot, our whole line shot, their whole line shot. And before I could stop I

Interview Transcript (continued)

landed right next to that Jap officer. And I mean next to him. We were that close. As soon as I hit I heard one of our officers, I recognized his voice, he says, "Pix on that Jap officer." In other words, touch him and we're going to shot you in the back or something like, maybe that wasn't it but he wanted that samurai sword. And of course I had made a deal with myself that I just wasn't going to take souvenirs. But that just kind of sticks in your head that somebody would do that. Another experience we had in between the airfields was three of us were down in a kind of ravine and the ravine pitched up over maybe 200 yards or so or 100 yards and they had a Japanese 37 millimeter artillery piece they couldn't locate. So they order us three to move up that draw to draw fire and of course we'd only moved once or twice before they saw the flash of this gun and then they called us back. Well, when they called us back I think they realized that, you know, it was kind of traumatic to charge up a valley like that looking for an artillery piece, so they called us back up to the top of the hill there and they gave us K-rations. We looked around for places to eat and there was no place to sit down except a pile of Japs about as high as this table that were lined up. We sat on them. It was kind of gory but you're looking for baseline information. That's not what they call it.

Van Ells: I know what you mean.

Chipman: So that's it. As we reached the second airfield--it went on an angle to where we were going--so it was one place where we could use tanks and five tanks went on the airfield, one after the other, in a column, and there was one regiment on one side of the airfield and our 23rd, our regiment was on the other side and we moved along as we could. We got about half way down the airfield and the first tank blew up. It hit a land mine which was a torpedo buried with a detonator on it and those big driving cogs, probably two feet across or so, maybe six inches, just like you threw a Frisbee. They just went up. And I had asked for the tank corps in boot camp. Boy I was glad I was not in a tank corps. But in about ten minutes four of the five tanks blew up. So we were, our feelings were god, those poor boys in those tanks, oh, man. So we weren't so bad being out as an infantryman. To be in a tank like that and have something blow up, just, it just was a series of pillboxes and caves and so forth and, of course, you took one at a time. You had to clear away the machine-guns and the riflemen first then get at that. Another thing that I was afraid of--I was afraid of being alone totally--I didn't want to be with six guys,

I wanted to be with one or two. When it came my turn we called in air support. When you do that one person has to climb, or crawl, out maybe 20, 25 yards in front of the lines and then you lay out a panel. Well, the aviator sees all those panels, he knows exactly where our lines are. But when you're crawling out there you don't know where a spider hole is with a Jap hidden in

Interview Transcript (continued)

it, you don't know where there's a cave or machine-gun nest but you have to crawl out there and to it. And I didn't like that very much. Each night just was a total nightmare and one was worse than the previous one. At night they didn't use aircraft for support; they'd call in 16-inch fire from the battleships, like the Indianapolis was out there, and when they'd hit in front of our lines, usually to break up one of the forward observers probably observed the flash of artillery piece or a gathering of Japanese, it would just bounce us off the ground. Those shells were so powerful that you just bounced off the ground--10, 12 inches. The other experience I had which was quite interesting was the first foxhole I dug one night I got down about two feet or so and I hit an ant colony. That was another unique experience. I got out of there in a hurry and dug another foxhole. There's some interesting things happened. Once it gets dark Marines do not leave their foxhole--for any reason. I guess there are some but not many. Any time there's movement, you know, definite movement, you would shoot. In the morning there was always one or two or three Japanese that were killed behind us because they had infiltrated our lines. Of course, we'd always have two or three in a foxhole and take turns staying awake. The other ones would doze off. At night just before it got dark we'd get replacements and they would stop and they would say, "Chip, here's two guys. Talk to them and break them in." you know. You do what you could and not being a teacher at the time and so forth you'd tell them what you could, what we do, and so forth. The next morning you'd move out and these guys would move out with you and, of course, you were taking care of yourself and whatever you're supposed to do. The next evening they were gone. The replacements really took it because, as bad as the beach was, coming across that beach I think it was good, it was a good experience because you learned how to move and you learned caution. I'll deviate from sticking with my real experiences to something that was sent to me by a Colonel Macahill who was in charge of replacements on the island because it was, it indicates what the battle was like. He sent a tape that indicated each evening he would bring replacements up after he found out how many a different company needed. He said the last two weeks of the battle it was so bad that he was ordered to go out to the hospital ships and take anybody that could eat and was not bleeding and those guys had to go back in the line. I just thank heaven that I was out of there earlier because I would have been one that would have had to get back in the fighting again. As we went down the airfield--you always hear about friendly fire and, of course, when different groups are going in and get orders you lose contact between them and there

was some Marines that got ahead of us and for a minute or two we fired at those people. I don't think we hit anybody but in that confusion it can occur. Well, as we got past the first airfield we ran into what they called the "Meat Grinder," "Turkey Knob," the "Amphitheater," and "Hill 382." Well, we drew up to Hill 382 which was the second highest hill on the island which had

Interview Transcript (continued)

a radar screen above and it was--if you've ever been to Arches, you've got some idea how rugged this hill was with all broken up rocks and so forth. The only other group I know was F-224 drew the Amphitheater and after three days on Hill 382 and they're fighting the Amphitheater they switched us over. I don't know why. We just took horrendous casualties trying to get that hill. We were up it six or seven times and always got knocked off of it. The approach to it was like being in a gully with maybe 75 yards of flat and then Hill 382 went up, real rugged, and then behind was a concave wall or cliff and I was ordered--by this time we were working with strangers, we didn't, half the people we were with we didn't know. One outfit would get disseminated and they'd bond two outfits together and so forth. I don't know who ordered me there but I threw hand grenades in about four caves and the fifth one was piled with sea bags so I emptied a clip into it and I came running back to, we were working with, we called in a flame-throwing tank to work on the pillbox and I was covering our rear, you know, and as I finished with the caves turned around and saw the flame ending going out of the tank so if I waited too long the Japs would come back in and start firing out of the opening again so I ran. As I ran across the field I saw a roll of Japanese money--I wasn't going to take souvenirs--I picked up that money, had the BAR in the left hand, picked up the money, put it in my jacket pocket, ran past the tank, hit against the pillbox and the Japs started zeroing in on the flame-thrower tank and seven of us got wounded all at once. So that was my souvenir. I didn't have it for a minute. I don't know whether that was prophecy or what it was. I went back to the battle aid station--

Van Ells: Were you able to go by yourself?

Chipman: Oh, yeah. I got hit in the left, I got hit in the left shoulder. I was ambulatory. When I got back there one of my friends was back there and he says when they took the jacket off and so forth he said, "Oh, heck, you've got a million dollar wound." It was probably worth more than a million dollars. It went through the shoulder. The corpsman patched me up and said, "You to back to the beach hospital." If you couldn't move, then a corpsman would come up to get you but I could move so I went back to the front line aid station. So I went back to the, on the way back to the beach where the beach hospital was, you couldn't see any body. You know, you'd walk and didn't see anybody. All of a sudden a helmet popped up and one of the mortar sergeants says, "How's it going up there?" And here a whole mortar squad was underground, you

know. You couldn't see a thing. When I got back to the beach hospital they rechecked the wound and, anyways, I had to wait my turn because there were guys that were wounded a lot worse than I was that was in there, and after nine days and seven hours on the front line and getting a K-ration or two a day I sat down--in the K-rations they had a little package of "dog biscuits" we called

Interview Transcript (continued)

them and I was hungry. This was half eaten, I picked it up and started to eat it and one of the corpsmen came over and handed me a candy bar, which was like getting a T-bone steak today. It was just a delight. But anyways, this was late, I was wounded about 4:05. Well, by the time I'd got back to the beach and they checked and so forth the hospital ship had pulled out so to get us out of the shelling that was still going on they put us on Higgins boats and they sent us out to the Indianapolis. When we got to the Indianapolis they put us in officers quarters--muddy, dirty, filthy, bloody--and they put us between white sheets. Every three hours they'd come in and they'd give us shots. I don't know what they were. But anyways I spent a night on the Indianapolis, which you know was sunk right at the end of the war off the Mariana's. It had delivered the components for the atomic bombs and it left and the captain didn't zig-zag and they lost so many people. I often reflect, you know, some poor officer lost a night's sleep because I slept in his bed and the poor guy, who knows what happened to him out there. But the next day they transferred us by breeches buoy over to the hospital ship Hope. The fellows that could walk were sent to take a shower and those that couldn't walk were bathed by nurses. We were given a bunk and they didn't check our wounds or anything on this day but when I went down to take a shower there was a sailor down there and I said, "Lift my bandage off. I want to see what happened." And they had big mirrors on the wall. When he pulled off the bandage I looked in the mirror, I fainted. To see your muscle sticking out like that, you know, it was just. And then, it was interesting, I wrote my first letter and you know, we were on the ship for a couple of months and we didn't write and then I sat down to write a V-mail letter to my mother and everything came back except the spelling of little words. I didn't know how to spell "of." Was it o-v-e, was it o-f-f, was it o-f? Something in the mind just didn't click. Punctuation and the rest was all there but some little words. Well, anyway, we were dropped off at Guam for a very short period of time and they did what they called a debriding of your wounds each day, you know, in the morning. We stayed there I think for about a week. There is some confusion, even in your records, things are wrong; you know they're wrong. When I came on the hospital ship I was told it was the Hope and I can't find a record or in writing where the Hope was there. We had three hospital ships--the Solace, I don't know what the other one was. But anyways, I'm sure I was on the Hope. After a time there, and I think what they did was they screened out those that would heal up in a hurry and then the ones that wouldn't heal they sent back on an APA to Pearl Harbor. On the, well, you could tell a whole story about the

Indianapolis. You could tell a whole story about the APA. But I think the most significant thing was that each day we'd get in line to have our bandages changed and I was talking to a young Marine that had his arm in a sling and bandaged hand. He said, "Well, I got hit in the hand." and he left it at that. Well, anyways, when it was his turn to go I was behind him. When I peeked

Interview Transcript (continued)

over to see how bad his hand was all there was the white bone sticking out where his fingers were and I fainted again. I would have made a heck of a corpsman. We got to Pearl Harbor again and they put us--the Naval hospitals were all filled up--so they put us in Schofield Barracks Army Hospital. They put a dozen of us lesser-wounded Marines into the Army hospital and they put us in a ward with the old guys that were 20, 21, 22 that had ruptures and hernias from working, you know. Well, there was several things there. I think, as far as the wound was concerned, after a short period of time they operated to close it and after ten days they took the stitches out and before the afternoon was over--it was on a shoulder, you know, where it stretches--it broke open so I got an extra stay in the hospital. They would pour penicillin on it and let it heal from the inside out. But while we were there, of course, we could walk so we did little things like they put us in the mess hall, they'd bring food in, they had a little mess hall, and we'd serve the other patients that were operated on and so forth. Until they found out we ate all their ice cream then they took us off that duty. After awhile we learned the routine--10:00 the doctor would come through and you'd get rebandaged, then no one would pay any attention to you the rest of the day, you'd go eat or to the Red Cross room or whatever. I can't recall how we got khaki uniforms but we did and we skipped out on liberty--every day. And we'd go to the Naval hospital, that was the only place we'd go, just the Naval hospital, to see if we could find friends. Then we'd come back. Well, after doing that for quite awhile the lieutenant in charge of our ward caught us one day coming in, he was waiting for us. He says, "Well, I'm going to run you guys up on charges." and we said, "Go ahead. Run us up. We won't have to go to the battle." That was the last we heard of it. The next day we were out again. The patients, the Army patients there, were afraid of us.

Van Ells: Marines you mean.

Chipman: They were afraid of us. We were young kids, we were irresponsible. At night when one guy didn't have a nightmare the other guy—

Chipman: Anyways, we'd have nightmares and we woke those poor guys up that just had operations.

Van Ells: These are battle nightmares.

Chipman: Yes, yes. The nightmare I had recurring, all that two months or so, I still remember it. I don't have the nightmare but I can tell you in detail what happened during it. So we weren't very welcome guests at the Army hospital. I think we were out from underneath the Marine control and we knew that we were going back in battle. Nobody cared. That's probably another

Interview Transcript (continued)

psychological study. I missed one real important thing. I'd like to go back to the hospital ship for just a second because I think it very revealing. As I woke up that morning and we were transferred to the hospital ship I stood at the rail and I looked at the island and you could see just where the front lines were by the flashes and the explosions and the dust and everything. My emotions emerged all at the same time; I thank the Lord for getting me through the fighting, I realized I didn't have to face death anymore at that particular time, that my injury was slight or not life-threatening, but at the same time I felt guilt that I had left my buddies. [long emotional pause] Then the question came to mind why was I spared? How can you be thankful and feel guilty at the same time? Also, one of the things on the hospital ship, you know, we were used to blacking out every night, you couldn't smoke, you couldn't have any lights aboard ship, but this hospital ship lit up like a Christmas tree. That was another, just a sensation of being fearful and just not being accustomed to light. Well, anyways after healing pretty well I left the hospital; there were still bandages on. They put us back in the transit center--

Van Ells: Was this back in Maui?

Chipman: No, this is back in Oahu. And they put us back in the transit center and we had actually nothing to do except entertain ourselves waiting to be reassigned and we, of course, went to the recreation building and get a ball and play catch or something, or things like that. While there they were looking for baseball players. Of course, I'd played quite a bit of baseball in high school years. I said, "Yeah. I'd like to play on this team." "Well, you'll have to sign off that you do not want to go back to your division and then you can try out for the team." so I signed. And so did quite a few other guys. Well, this candy-ass officer used a ploy and what he was trying to do was build up an MP company to send back to Saipan to retrain for the invasion of Japan. And this was his ploy to get guys to sign up for that. It just did not make you very appreciative of officers, inexperienced officers. I'm sure a battle officer would not have done that. Should make a comment about the corpsmen in the hospital. They were very kind. The doctors and the corpsmen were extremely kind. The treatment was excellent. You can't complain about what they did after you were wounded. So, we were put in this MP Company and it was called the 5th MP Battalion--it was a company but they called at a battalion. Then it changed to the 6th MP Company. We left Pearl Harbor and went to Eneiwetok again and back to Saipan and we were stationed at Saipan and we

had conflicting duties. We were provost troops, in other words, policemen, on the island but they were training us--we had six little islands. They had, I don't know what they called it, extending the authority of the United States to certain territories and we met ten Japs on one, some none. On one island we had patrols all over the island, usually it was a mountain that was sticking out

Interview Transcript (continued)

of the ocean. We'd land at maybe 2:00, 2:30 in the morning in rubber boats and then we'd sneak our way up to the top and then sweep down. If we flushed anybody, fine. If we didn't, we'd go back on the ship.

Van Ells: Was there sometimes combat on these islands?

Chipman: Oh, yeah. There was shooting and grenades and stuff. Not much. I think the most Japanese we killed on one of those islands was ten. One island had Chamorran on.

Van Ells: What's that?

Chipman: Those are the natives of the Mariana's. Through the interpreters they told us that the Japanese had taken all the young men and boys. They may have had that experience. Maybe they were hiding from us. We don't know. But on one island the B-29s got over Tokyo and they couldn't drop their bombs so they were ordered to drop them on the island that we were on. And they made one bomb run on us. I don't know whether it was a 500 pound bomb or what it was but if you know palm trees, they're awful hard, and this thing cleared off about half a square block. It took everything down and the trees alongside. If you take an ice cream scoop and the ice cream, it just cut the trees away like that. So we did a lot of praying on that island also. At night the ships that we were on, there were two of them, we'd go and they would anchor in an extinct volcano that had washed away and they could go in there. I assume that it was, you know, to avoid submarines. They would allow us to swim and we'd dive off of one side of the ship, swim underneath--these were LCIs--they were smaller, like destroyers, similar to destroyers. One night when I came up I went to the back and, we called them "gook guides," they were Chamorran people that knew the islands, they were catching sharks about three, four foot long off the back of the ship. That was the end of my swimming in the ocean after that. Anyways, we came back from that. That was, I have the dates but I think they're unimportant. We came back and resumed our duties. I made the baseball team so I got light duty of driving the officer of the day, and there were a lot of experiences with police patrol but it didn't have anything to do with fighting. Our colonel who was in charge at the time--I skipped over FDR's death--that happened when I was in the hospital--and I'm forgetting things and bringing some important things in. What I said about the Army I think has to be modified by this statement that we, being in the hospital for a

couple of months, your mail catches up with you. By that time the word had gotten home about who was killed, you know, in our city and so forth, and we'd go to the hospital, the Naval hospital, and we'd find out who was killed. Of course, you know, you'd hear somebody got killed, you'd cry, you know. And I have to say this for the soldiers. They were considerate enough; they

Interview Transcript (continued)

didn't pay any attention to us at all. They just let us go. Which I think, in retrospect, I thought that was very good. You know, they could have made fun of us or anything. So we came back, played a lot of baseball, did a lot of driving around Saipan, and our colonel decided that there was a Captain Hora, a Japanese captain, that he was, a certain number of Japanese had avoided the fighting and when the island was secured they went up to Topachau, a mountain called Topachau and they were living up there. They'd come down and steal food and clothing and so forth. They wouldn't bother anybody unless somebody went souvenir hunting and got too close and then a couple of sailors got killed. So he decided he was going to get rid of those guys. And we went around the north side of Topachau, which was the uninhibited side, the unuseful side, and we lined up in a scrimmage line to move up that mountain the next day. Of course, I've got a BAR again and everybody got their specialty but I had been a jeep driver and had learned how to use the radios. So we were laying there waiting for I suppose dawn, I'm not sure what, and I went back to the jeep and we played around with the channels. Now we were on the side of the island where nobody was. The harbor was on the other side. We didn't hear any noise or anything. We fiddled around with the channels until we got the ship channels and they said the war was over. This was VJ Day. That's how we found out VJ Day was occurred. So I went and I told the sergeant. He told the lieutenant and they called it off. But now there's a book written by this captain, I think it was Hora, who had his Japanese soldiers on that mountain and he had every weapon that the Japanese had and we had maybe 300 men in line. I don't know how many men he had but he had just a horrendous--it would have been a slaughter. So, again, who can you thank but the Lord? These are unique things in war. It's totally--

Van Ells: So when the war ended, that's how you found out.

Chipman: That's how we found out.

Van Ells: So you didn't know about the atomic bomb? Where did you learn about that?

Chipman: No. I can't recall that at all but I'm sure it was in the next couple of days when we learned about that. We were, I went through a sequence. Started out guarding Japanese prisoners on Saipan. Another reflection is that while I shot at them and threw grenades where they were, on a one-to-one basis guarding them, I couldn't be mean to them. I gave them the candy and the cigarettes I

didn't smoke. I did run into a quandary, which I think might be interesting to somebody down the line. That is, I was ordered to take a Japanese prisoner and collect some bamboo. The bamboo grew on the edge of the jungle area. And he walked away from me and he started walking toward the jungle. So I grabbed the rifle and I pulled it back and I let a round go in the chamber and

Interview Transcript (continued)

he heard it and turned around and threw his hands up. And then he pointed up to some bananas that he was going after bananas. I said, "No, you come back here." But if he would have been going to the jungle to escape, I'm not sure I could have shot him. I don't know. It's an interesting hypothesis. I'm glad it never came to rest. I think, in kind of summarizing things, that I went through three stages in the battle of Iwo Jima. The first psychological stage, I think it was total terror, just total terror and a reliance on the Lord. And I don't have to tell you why, it was evident with the number of casualties and what was taking place. The second stage, I believe, set in after we got across the first airfield on the second day and that was a stage of being preoccupied with orders and tasks but being extremely careful. I think that lasted probably three or four days. I couldn't tell you unless I was put under hypnosis or something. But the final stage, the day I got hit on February 27 on Hill 382, I think by that time I was only in a football game. I was having fun. I never thought of getting hurt or wounded or anything. A question remains in my mind because of this, why did some people have battle fatigue and other people it became a game? Could be stupidity, could be anything. I'd have to do some reading on that I think. But that's, as I analyze myself, I think that was the three basic stages that I went through. After that I think things became pretty mundane in that we were playing ball, we were driving, we knew we were going home sooner or later. The way I, our group, or part of our group, got to go home, was that about 2:00 in the morning they woke us up and they said, "Come on. We've got a message from Pearl. You guys are going home." So, of course, the elation was, we'd do anything if we knew we were going home. It was total elation. But to show you some of the maybe sidelight or character of some of the people that we were with, we knew the outfit was breaking up and some fellas went to the duty shack where they kept the handcuffs and flashlights, you know, all the stuff that we had, and they took those.

Van Ells: As souvenirs, you mean?

Chipman: Yeah, souvenirs. As a ballplayer it didn't bother me at all. I went to the athletic shack and I let the air out of basketballs and footballs and catchers mitts. I took about half a sea bag full of athletic equipment home. I threw away towels and underclothes to get that in and when I got home my mother says, "Towels. We couldn't buy towels for two years." and I had thrown them away. **[END SIDE A, TAPE 2]** Our feelings were just one of total elation, you know. I'm sure if we'd have got, any one of us, would have got caught

we'd have been court-martialed and we wouldn't have been out of the Marines. But we got on the USS Breckinridge, which was a luxury liner before the war and took us right straight back to Treasure Island, right off of San Francisco. The things that occurred to me was, about the trip on the Breckinridge was that there was a lot of gambling. The Marines were not

Interview Transcript (continued)

paid. We left so quick we didn't get paid which was good because some of us may have lost our money. The second thing was as we came up towards San Francisco we'd been in 85-degree weather for two years or more and we all caught colds. So the corpsman went to sick bay and the corpsman gave a handful of pills and he said, "Take one of these every three hours." He didn't tell me to gargle with them. I swallowed a pill that was supposed to be gargled. I had a sore throat. And I got sick. Boy, that was the worst seasick I've ever been. The other thing was who caught the guard duty on the ship? The Marines. They had 6,000 soldiers and a few, maybe 50 Marines, caught all the duty. It's the only time I left my post. The word came around, I was on duty in a bottom hole, and the word came we're going underneath the Golden Gate Bridge. I went up to see the Golden Gate Bridge. We spent a few days at Treasure Island, the barracks there. And they checked our clothes and so forth to make sure that we had enough stuff to go home with. Then they put us on a train. And, of course, the train trip was jubilant.

Van Ells: You're going back to where?

Chipman: Great Lakes in Illinois. I don't remember much about it except we were still taken care of. They fed us. We were on those cattle cars again. Even though we were part of a regular train setup the servicemen were separate. When we got to the Great Lakes they gave us a total physical which is immaterial and they told us if you wanted any dental work you had to stay a day or two and if you wanted to put in for a disability you had to stay three days. Well, I had just turned 20 on the train coming home and what kid is going to stay a couple extra days when he's been away from home for a lengthy period of time? So I waived both things, just get me home. Another experience I had, again this has nothing to do with combat but, a flannel shirt in the Marines was a prized possession because they stopped issuing them and the newer people coming in, only the old salts had them, and I had this thing in a bag stacked with athletic equipment marked USMC. We went into a table like this and a PFC or a private was going through the bags to make sure you didn't have any weapons or 782 gear. He got down two or three things and he came up with the shirt and, "Oh, they don't issue those anymore." and I thought well, I said, "It got kind of tight for me. Would you like it?" He says, "Yeah." He put it aside, he put my stuff back in the sea bag and closed it up, and I got away with it. I guess, I had a cousin who felt so sorry for me because out of 58 cousins in our relation -- my mother had ten in her family and my dad had ten so you

know it was a big family -- I was the only one that was wounded although many of them were in the service. So she came down to meet me and we went home on the Northshore Line. I remember that, Northshore Line. Of course, our welcome home was a couple aunts and uncles and my mother and dad, and that was our big parade. That's all we, well. I remember, you know, just total

Interview Transcript (continued)

elation. One of the feelings I had--I came home in the morning, my mother, of course, prepared lunch for all the relatives that came over, and I was edgy eating in that small kitchen. After eating in a mess hall and outside for two years you come back and here you're sitting in a small kitchen with a bunch of people piled in. I couldn't get used to it. I think the only, well, only other significant thing related was that until I got married which was six years later, nobody could move in our house and I was awake. The nightmares didn't come back. Once or twice, they came back. As I said, I was married before I could, someone could move around me, so. Whatever took place psychologically or maybe even physically in your body just didn't go away. We didn't say anything. We thought it was normal. So that happened to most of the guys, you know. We didn't cry to the VA about it or anything. Well, I know I've forgotten things but if I could sum it up, I know you asked what I did. When I came home my goal was to play professional baseball and I did for two seasons; one down in Texas in the East Gulf Coast League with Jacksonville, Texas and then I played a little bit with Henderson, Texas in the East Texas League. I could tell things about that but enough said that that was part of my goals. Of course I enlisted in college as soon as I got home. I played football. I'd come home and play football in the fall, drop out in the spring and go play baseball. I was just having a ball. I didn't want to get married. I didn't want to do anything. Right after I got into college, I think it was the beginning of the second year in college. I was cutting the grass in back and my mother came out and she said, "You got something from the Marine Corps in this envelope." A big envelope. So I opened it and read it and here it was papers to go to OCS, Officers Candidate School. And I was playing ball and football. What did I want with Officers Candidate School? So we laughed, she and I both laughed and threw them away. I wish I would have saved them because it would have proved that I had a chance to go to Officers Candidate School. Then, of course, I went to college. Graduated from UWM in Milwaukee, got a masters degree from UW in Madison, and I got a job teaching in Milwaukee public schools, and then became a principal. Spent 31 1/2 years in Milwaukee public schools. I helped coach some Carroll College, just as a helper for a couple of years. I helped coach some professional and semi-professional football. I coached a little high school baseball at West Allis Central in the early years. I was active in sports. When I began teaching in 1951, then the next year I got married to Alice Hartman. We have one daughter who is an associate professor at Marquette, and one daughter that's an ear, nose and throat doctor in California. So those are the

only, and of course, we have some grandchildren. Needless to say, I became very devote in going to church and religion.

Van Ells: Now, not to interject, was this because of the war or was this something you felt before the war?

Interview Transcript (continued)

Chipman: Well, I had gone to Sunday school regularly and church regularly. I was confirmed and I believed thoroughly in God. But the experience, the traumatic experience just cemented in, there's no question in my mind that the Lord was guiding things. There couldn't be. There was no control you had, no one had control on that damn island. I don't care if they were a general or what. Look at Buckner on Okinawa. The highest general there blown away. Luck, I can't put too much faith in luck. I put my faith in the Lord.

Van Ells: Just for the record, if you don't mind, which denomination are you?

Chipman: I grew up a Lutheran. We're United Church of Christ now, which is the same thing. But I've served on the Christian board of education; I've been superintendent of Sunday school, senior youth advisors. I'm now in the 50th year; I have different bulletins that we're recognizing the 50th anniversary. I'll show you when we're done. I became active in the 4th Marine Division Association after I found out they had one.

Van Ells: Oh, I see.

Chipman: In about 1975. I served as executive secretary producing the newsletter for three years. I was on the board of advisors for that organization for four. I was national president in '85, '86. I'm still history chairman. My job of history ends at the end of the war. The historical picks up the association. As I indicated we wrote six different books. I brought a couple along; I'll show you if you're interested.

Van Ells: I certainly am very interested.

Chipman: I started the local chapter for the 4th Marine Division and served as two years as president for that. I belong to four chapters, Florida, Carolinas, Chicago, and Milwaukee, or Wisconsin. Life membership in three of them. We've attended reunions, many, many reunions of the company. You can't explain the feeling to be with, I'm much closer emotionally and socially to the fellas I served with. Not all of them, but the ones we call buddies. There's a difference between a Marine you served with and a buddy. Explain it, I don't know but there is a difference.

Van Ells: After 50 years.

Chipman: It's still there. You forget very little. If I could just ramble, I'd be more detailed but this, I'm trying to get into the specific before my wife leaves me upstairs. I joined the Marine Corps League, Badger Detachment, in

Interview Transcript (continued)

Milwaukee in 1985 because we were bringing the national reunion of the 4th to Milwaukee in '86 and we had nothing so we needed help. I became first vice commandant there and I was supposed to go in as commandant but we travel so much, then we even traveled so much, that I couldn't have the continuity that an organization needs. I developed a public relations officer position and I've been serving on that since probably '88 or so. And there I wrote the job description so I could do just about what I want. I have a group that puts flags in the cemetery. I make the arrangements and the program for the Marine memorial service on Memorial Day. I started a drill team, which turned into just a marching team. I've been on the committee to welcome the Gulf people home. I'm a delegate to the Allied Veterans Council in Milwaukee. I, for years now, I've set up rifle matches for former Marines at Hartland Sportsmen Club and now August 9 we have one coming up, national match for just Marines, former Marines, at Racine County Line on August 9. I'm setting that up. I headed two committees--

Chipman: I run the awards committee for the Marine Corps League. I was master of ceremonies for the memorial service for three years. I've set up the speakers for any number of years now. I was chief of staff for Badger Detachment one year. A life member of the Marine Corps League, 4th Marine Division. You name it. I was an officer in the Devil Dogs which is a kind of corollary organization of the Marine Corps League. I've written three veterans related articles for the *Milwaukee Journal* which have been published. Oh, how, my immediate goals now, West Allis put up a veterans park where you can put up a monument and they put bricks around with your names on, of the veterans. I put one up for my father and myself and I noticed that a lot of fellas that were killed that I know did not have bricks. So we're in the process of collecting all the names from the War Memorial, from the West Allis Star, from the high schools, we're trying to get a concrete list of people that were killed from West Allis and they we're going to start a committee to get funds to buy these people bricks. Plan to stay active in the veterans groups as much as possible. This coming Wednesday, the 7th, we're going to Brookfield Senior Center and a Lieutenant Colonel Spordon and myself have memorabilia from the war-- even though I didn't take any souvenirs--people knew I was in the Marines and all of a sudden I had a Jap rifle, I had a samurai sword--

Van Ells: People will give it to you.

Chipman: Yeah, they'll give us stuff. And then we put on, we've been the Wauwatosa West, we've been to churches, we've been to the INI from Madison here, put on a show for their instructor/inspector, officers and NCOs. We have 72 slides on Iwo battle and we have, we take excerpts out of different videos,

Interview Transcript (continued)

maybe a minute or two out of the videos to make points, and then we put up, we could fill probably a dozen tables like you have with different memorabilia, American and Japanese. So we do that. And basically, our objective is that we do not feel that the people who gave up their lives should be forgotten. Also, as I indicated before, our youngsters have to be educated and know the price that was paid for their freedoms that they're abusing today. Unless you have questions --

Van Ells: I've got a couple more actually. It involves the GI Bill and your years in school. To finance your education, did you use the GI Bill?

Chipman: Yes. When I came home the first summer I was so interested in playing ball and trying out for the Fond du Lac Panthers that I didn't want to work. So I joined the 5220 Club for a couple of months. Well, as soon as I enrolled in college they didn't bug me about getting a job. And I went to college, I got five years of college -- \$68 a month, all the books, all the tuitions. It wasn't consecutive but I got way into my graduate studies with the GI Bill.

Van Ells: Before the GI Bill ran out on you.

Chipman: Before my, I had two months were I did not get a check from the GI Bill in graduate school.

Van Ells: Do you think you would have gone to college without it?

Chipman: My dad dropped out of high school at 17 to join the Army and he pumped into us school, school, college, college. I think, my dad, when I came home, my dad said, "You're welcome here. You follow my rules." As usual, you follow his rules. "As long as you're going to school you don't have to pay room and board." So I'm sure he would have sent us to college. By the way, my brother, who did not go in the service, played A ball, he got all the way to Yakima, Washington in A ball. He was offered by Danny Mansfield, he was the coach of the baseball team out here, in 1968 I believe it was, he was offered a full scholarship, couldn't give him spending money, they'd have to clean the stadium every Saturday for spending money. How many games do they have in the stadium? He was offered. He turned it down. he went out to play pro baseball. So in our family it was two different ways. You couldn't get me out of school. I have I think it's 76 credits over a master's degree. I

never went for a Ph.D. I got married and responsibilities and school and so forth.

Van Ells: Okay. One more thing now. On the campus of UW Milwaukee, I've spoken to a lot of vets who went to the campus here and describe how it was flooded

Interview Transcript (continued)

with veterans and everyone they knew was a veteran. Was that the case in your school? Briefly.

Chipman: Basically, yes, except for the women. I would say that the football team was probably totally veterans. I know we had a few kids that just came out of high school. I would, just from my recollection, I would say that as we went from - - see I dropped out two springs to play ball and, of course, I got behind in my class but as we went along there were more and more high school kids in there and you could tell the difference. The maturity and not only physically but decisions and so forth. GI Bill was extremely good to me.

Van Ells: Well, that's interesting. Well I think you for taking this time out of your busy schedule.

Chipman: Well, I hope that it helps educate somebody or someone who's interested. Hopefully there's something in there that they can pick up. I know I missed a lot of things. You can see.

Van Ells: Thanks a lot. I appreciate it.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]