

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Clay Reeves

Date of Interview: October 25, 2007

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Telephone interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler; today is October 25th, 2007. I am interviewing Mr. Clay Reeves by telephone. I am located in Fredericksburg, Texas and he is located in Oakley, Michigan. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies; archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Let me start out, Clay, by thanking you for spending the time this evening to share your experiences with us and let me just get you rolling by having you introduce yourself...and when and where you were born and a little bit about your parents. Are you there?

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Reeves: Okay, I was born on December 6th, 1921 in Owosso, Michigan which is just a few miles from where Oakley is.

Ed Metzler: Okay, can you spell that hometown please?

Mr. Reeves: O-w-o-s-s-o.

Ed Metzler: Because I know when we transcribe this if people are not from Michigan, they won't know where it is... okay good! And what did your parents...what...what did your father do for a living?

Mr. Reeves: Okay, was...we were farming, and...

Ed Metzler: So were you born on the farm?

Mr. Reeves: No, I was born in Owosso in...in...while he...I mean (unintelligible) that time...

Ed Metzler: I see.

Mr. Reeves: ...and he quit that and we moved out to the farm.

Ed Metzler: Okay, and...brothers and sisters?

Mr. Reeves: I have four brothers, no sisters.

Ed Metzler: Were you the youngest, the oldest or what?

Mr. Reeves: Oh Fred was the oldest, and then Ken and then Chum (sp?) and then me and then To...uh, Charles...

Ed Metzler: Okay, so you were...

Mr. Reeves: ...they're all dead now.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so you're the survivor, huh?

Mr. Reeves: I'm the survivor.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. And so did you go to school there in the area? Where did you go to school?

Mr. Reeves: Well I went to a country school in...in Bridge (sp?) Township which is near Oakley and only went to eight grades because there was no buses in those

days to go to high school and Dad said he needed me on the farm, so I didn't go to high school.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and there were a lot of people just like you!

Mr. Reeves: Had eight grades and that was it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Reeves: And that...in those days...that was sufficient.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's absolutely what I've heard, too. So after your eight grades, you then what...worked on the farm helping your father?

Mr. Reeves: I worked on the farm and in...in '29 my folks lost the farm that we had in the crash, but they were able to keep their animals and their tools. In...in '39...why the bank foreclosed and they lost everything and they had nothing. So then when I had...I went to work on a farm for a year or so and my brother got me a job in Saginaw Malleable Iron before the war in 1941...'40 I believe.

Ed Metzler: Got you a job where now?

Mr. Reeves: In a Saginaw Malleable Iron ...it was a foundry.

Ed Metzler: Okay, Malleable Iron, alright, alright. 'Cause Saginaw as I remember...quite an industrial town.

Mr. Reeves: Yes, it was then; it's not so much now.

Ed Metzler: No, I know; things have changed.

Mr. Reeves: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, right, Saginaw Gear and all that.

Mr. Reeves: And of course then December 7th came, and Pearl Harbor and I had some obligations financially to meet and I told my mother on the 8th day of...of

December I was going to join the Marine Corps and she said no I couldn't because I had these financial obligations. And so I set about to pay them up and on September 2nd I had everything paid and...and I went and joined the Marine Corps...

Ed Metzler: So this in '42 now?

Mr. Reeves: September 2nd, 1942.

Ed Metzler: Correct, so alright. Well let me ask you about...you mentioned Pearl Harbor...tell me what you remember about where you were; what you were doing when you...you and your family first heard about that.

Mr. Reeves: Well I was...I was not married then; I was a single boy, and my birthday of course was Sept...uh, December 6th and I was 20 years old, and my folks had...had bought a farm – forty acres. My mother got some...a little money from an inheritance and they bought a farm, and...forty acres and house and buildings...and we were trying...this particular day we were trying to get the house...the place cleaned up and ready to live in...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...and we heard that they...Pearl Harbor was bombed. At that time I was working in Saginaw and...

Ed Metzler: So I guess you heard it over the radio like most folks, huh?

Mr. Reeves: Yes it was on...it was on a car...my brother's car radio.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, what was...what was everybody's reaction?

Mr. Reeves: We were stunned honestly. 'Cause the words...there was no...we didn't know where (unintelligible) were...we had no idea and a lot of people thought

we'd that we being in...in the United States of America we could overcome this over night...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...and that was impossible. And the Japs really did more damage than what we thought, and we never did get the report of how bad it was. We...we did get the...how many ships had been lost but...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...the carriers weren't there, of course.

Ed Metzler: And did your...your older brothers...did they go in at that point; did they get drafted or what?

Mr. Reeves: No, I had two older brothers; both were married and both had three children.

Ed Metzler: Ah!

Mr. Reeves: And more...one had more than that, and so they were too old to go in.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: And then my brother older than me was married and had a baby in December and so he didn't go in. My younger brother went into the Army later and...he never did get overseas.

Ed Metzler: So now we go forward to September 1942 and that's when you went into the Marines.

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Why the Marines?

Mr. Reeves: Well I...I think probably because at that time they were the best known people...uh, service that there was.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: You did see them a bit on...on movies and newsreels and so on, and I just thought that that would be...I know I was...talked to a number of people about why I didn't go into the Army Air Corps and so I had no education so there was no way that I could do that...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...so I went into the Marine Corps and...

Ed Metzler: So where'd you do your basic training?

Mr. Reeves: In San Diego.

Ed Metzler: Okay, that's a long way from home, wasn't it?

Mr. Reeves: It's a long way.

Ed Metzler: Had you ever really been very far away from home when you went out to the west coast?

Mr. Reeves: I never had been away from home very...just very little. And as far as travelling anywheres, I didn't. I...I was away from home for a couple of years, but I didn't...I...I still had home that I could go to any time I wanted.

Ed Metzler: Right. So what was that experience like jumping on that train and going all that distance?

Mr. Reeves: Well I'll tell you, it...kind of a crazy thing we...we...I got to Boston...Bay City and...through Detroit and we got into Detroit about 4:00 o'clock and we had to be sworn in. And there was some Recruiting Sergeants or Corporals there and they had to use an old typewriter to type up thing and the Corporal typed up my papers...and took him about four or five minutes and asked me

some questions about my parents and what nationality they were, and because my mother was German, why he...spent more time on it. (laughter) But anyway, he asked me what my name was; my full name...Clay Woodrow Reeves, and he said sign the names here on the line and I never had signed my full name in my life...

Ed Metzler: Is that right?!

Mr. Reeves: ...I signed Clay W. Reeves and (unintelligible)...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Reeves: ...and called me a bunch of names.

Ed Metzler: Welcome to the military!

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, and he...he typed up another set of papers and he asked me when he got them done..., "What's your full name?" And I told him and he says, "Fine." And I signed on the wrong line. (laughter) And he swore at me some more and he says, "You won't...you won't last two weeks (unintelligible) you're stupid!"

Ed Metzler: Oh my!

Mr. Reeves: So I...went from there to...after the third set of papers...I signed on the right line; I went and got my physical and some other things and...and an old retired Major...at my retirement [s/b enlistment?] and he inspected us and there were about forty of us and we (unintelligible) ranks.

Ed Metzler: Did you know anybody in the group other...?

Mr. Reeves: No.

Ed Metzler: Anybody else?

Mr. Reeves: No.

Ed Metzler: So you were out alone, huh?

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, and he inspected us and he went...we stood in ranks and we...parade rest...and he looked at the forward in front and rear and then he come down through the rear and he stopped behind me...and of course I had my hands behind me at parade rest and he says, "What kind of work do you do, son?"

And I says, "I poured iron in the foundry." And he put his hand on my shoulder and he says, "You'll make a good one!"

Ed Metzler: Ah ha!

Mr. Reeves: And my...I just went...about through the roof, I guess, then, and I made up my mind then that I might not be the best Marine there ever was but I'd be the best one that (unintelligible) because (unintelligible)...that's what I tried to do while I was in.

Ed Metzler: Well that's...I guess that helped kind of turn your mind around a little bit after inauspicious start.

Mr. Reeves: Because this...originally, that Corporal that told me that I was stupid and I wouldn't last two weeks...that's what I thought.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Reeves: But anyway, I got on a train; we stayed overnight there and got a train the next morning to Chicago and I got a sleeper to...San Diego. It was three days on the...on the train; got into San Diego and (unintelligible)...became the 760th Platoon.

Ed Metzler: 760th?!

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, and that was...we had our Sergeant...Drilling Instructor was Aholtz (sp?), and he was helped by Corporal Tracey (sp?) which was...he...they...they...a couple of the guys came in...if they had any ability at all, they give them temporary promotions. And that's what he was; he was just a young man that was...he hadn't been in the Marine Corps very long but he had qualifications; he could handle the Assistant D.I. and that's what they give him. But anyway we got with there...I think six weeks...in basic training and...

Ed Metzler: So how hard was that for you or was it?

Mr. Reeves: Oh, I...it...today we...now today it would be very difficult...even if I was at that age of twenty years old. But in those days they...primarily it was...ready to get...they wanted to get people ready for the service and for the war and they worked us hard but not as hard as what I think they do today.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Reeves: I...I don't think so...I...I know it...it was hard; it wasn't eas...wasn't very easy but it still was...was a...I didn't see anybody that was rejected because of that.

Ed Metzler: Well they needed you and I guess also you were in good physical shape because you'd had a hard job there on the foundry floor.

Mr. Reeves: Right I...I was in good shape physically and...they...well we had the six weeks in basic training and then...we...they took...in those days they took a whole platoon [of] men...it got the mystery out of it, and that was...guys work in the mess hall for thirty days before they put...put you into a unit, and

our platoon just was unlucky enough to draw...mess duty. So the Sergeant Aholtz marched us over to the mess hall and then a little old guy, Monte Sargent (sp?) from Georgia...little ole short fellow...and of course I was a big person in those days...I...I'm six foot, three or four, and he says, "Slim, step out here," and so I stepped out of rank, and he called out several Corporals from the kitchen and they come out and...these guys go with us...Corporal So-and-so, these with So-and-so and...until I was the only one left, and he says, "Well come on and I'll show you what you're going to do." And he went around...we went around to the back of the galley and he had an office there that was probably about twenty by twenty-four and he had a desk and a telephone and he says, "Now stay in here and answer the telephone...the whole time; don't let nobody get in...that's not authorized." And in those days Nabisco made cookies; they put them in a box about...about a half a bushel and with a cardboard box and with a cellophane top on them and (unintelligible)...and there's probably thirty, forty boxes of cookies in there.

Ed Metzler: Good gracious!

Mr. Reeves: He says, "You're to keep everybody out of those cookies!" (laughter) Well, he didn't say nothing about me (laughter), but anyway I weighed 186 when I went in the Marine Corps and when I got done with mess duty I weighed 225!

Ed Metzler: My gosh! You must have really eaten a few cookies!

Mr. Reeves: I ate a lot of cookies I think. Then they sent us out to Camp Pendleton which was, at that time, was...was there, but Tent Camp was Camp Linda Vista...that's where we went and we formed the 2nd Anti-Tank Battalion.

And in...I think in February '43, we went overseas and we were thirty-six days aboard the ship...(unintelligible), and...

Ed Metzler: So was this a...old what...a troop carrier or what?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, it was converted...they said it was a cattle ship, but I don't know what it was...(laughter), but anyway it was an old ship and we were thirty-six days aboard ship and we went to Wellington, New Zealand. And from there...

Ed Metzler: So...so you went straight from San Diego to New Zealand?

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: To Wellington?

Mr. Reeves: We were sent there because they...the Japanese they thought would invade there and we...we would be...which was an anti-tank battalion to defend the island because most of the men in the...in New Zealand and Australia were fighting the war in Africa.

Ed Metzler: That's right!

Mr. Reeves: So...

Ed Metzler: Well let me ask you this, did you get seasick?

Mr. Reeves: I...I was seasick...I was aboard ships thirteen times, and I got seasick fourteen times. Now that sounds foolish, but...

Ed Metzler: So you doubled up on one of those, huh?

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, it was the last one...we stopped at Eniwetok for a day, and...and I...I was sick when they took off again, so...

Ed Metzler: Well did you ever get over it or...?

Mr. Reeves: Well yes; after about a week you get over it...

Ed Metzler: Oh my goodness!

Mr. Reeves: ...(unintelligible) three or four days...

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Reeves: ...but eating was a problem, and...

Ed Metzler: Well I guess you lost some of that weight you got in...in basic?

Mr. Reeves: Oh yes, I lost everywhere...real quick...in training and so on.

Ed Metzler: So what was your...so you were in anti-tank battalion; is that what I heard?

Mr. Reeves: That's what it was and...

Ed Metzler: And what was your role?

Mr. Reeves: Uh, I became...well I made Corporal in...in...and I was on a half-track...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Reeves: ...at that time. And I was gunner on a half-track, and of course then...the 1st Marine Division landed on Guadalcanal in August of...of '42, and in November of '42 they...they won the victory as they were...(unintelligible). So the Japanese (unintelligible) were no longer a problem and the anti-tank unit in the jungles was not any use, so they broke us up and...to New Zealand and sent half the guys as replacements to various groups and the rest of the half of us went back home.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so you went to New Zealand...you were there how...for how long?

Mr. Reeves: Oh, we was there probably a good six, eight months.

Ed Metzler: And then they took half of you and put them...them in as replacements and then sent you back stateside?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, and we...we went from New Zealand to New Caledonia and there I made Corporal...and they sent us home. And when I got back to...got a month's furlough...and then we formed the 5th Marine Division at Camp Pendleton and there I made Buck Sergeant. And then with...

Ed Metzler: So what Marine Division were you in before?

Mr. Reeves: There was no division; it was called 2nd Anti-Tank Battalion.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Reeves: We probably would have been assigned to 2nd...2nd Division but we...we just 2nd Anti-Tank Battalion.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so they formed the 5th Marines...

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ...and so you went into that.

Mr. Reeves: And while we were in Camp Pendleton I was playing volleyball one night and I flipped and fell backwards and I caught myself and my left arm is...I sort of sprained my wrist and I didn't do anything about it. And we went overseas and we were going to Guam, but the 3rd Marine Division was doing so well there that we weren't needed, and they...we stopped off at the big island of Hawaii, and we stayed there till...where the 2nd Marine Division had stayed.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, now roughly what time are we now? Is this late '43 or what?

Mr. Reeves: That...that would be in '44 because we (unintelligible) in July '44.

Ed Metzler: Oh, okay.

Mr. Reeves: So, while in Hawaii I was having a...at this time I'm a Buck Sergeant, I had a gun crew on a thirty-seven millimeter anti-tank gun, and we'd go out on

maneuvers and have to dig an emplacement for it and...with those little shovels that we had...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...and my wrist would hurt. And of course each...each platoon is assigned a Corpsman, Navy Corpsman, and they're...they're tremendous people honestly. They're in between a Nurse and a Doctor and they're very capable. And I told (unintelligible) my arm hurt and I had to dig a hole and he said, "Well, we'll have it x-rayed." And they x-rayed it and they found my wrist was broken, and they put a cast on it.

Ed Metzler: So what's this...your right or your left wrist?

Mr. Reeves: My left wrist...which didn't hold...hold me back too much because I'm right handed.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: So they put a short cast on it and in thirty days they took it off, and it still was broken and they put another cast on. And meanwhile we got word that we was going to combat and our Captain was Captain Glassman (sp?) of our company...

Ed Metzler: Glassmer?

Mr. Reeves: Glassman, G-l-a-s-s-m-a-n.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Reeves: And he called me down to his office which was a tent and says, "We're going into combat and you have a broken wrist; we're going to leave you here."
And I told him, I says, "Captain Glassman, I've been in the Marine Corps now

almost three years and I've been overseas twice; I haven't seen no action yet, and I want to go. Would you let me aboard ship? I'll...we'll probably be three or four weeks aboard ship and the day before we land I'll go down to the ship's sick bay and have my cast removed and x-rayed then you can make up your mind then what to do." And he had more problems than me, and so he says, "Well, that's fine; we'll do that."

Ed Metzler: Well, that was nice of him!

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: He didn't have to do that.

Mr. Reeves: No he didn't. So I stayed with the platoon and, at that time, Platoon Sergeant Hunt was promoted and we were without a Platoon Sergeant, so they made me acting Platoon Sergeant of 1st Platoon, 26th Marines and 5th Division. And I got the...the rank but I didn't get the job...position...I got the position, I guess I should say. And we had a First Lieutenant that was our officer...Lieutenant Skelton (sp?), First Lieutenant, and so the day before we went to Iwo Jima, the 18th of February, I had Galardi (sp?) cut the cast off my arm and I went down to ship's sick bay and he give me a paper to...have...x-ray my arm and see if it was broken, and it wasn't and so he give me...wrote something on the paper and I took it back to Captain Glassman. And he says, "You're going ashore." So...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, but wasn't there a little trick you played on them?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, I had them x-ray my right hand instead of my left.

Ed Metzler: You tricky devil!

Mr. Reeves: I had to do that; I...I had to. I...

Ed Metzler: Why did you feel like you had to?

Mr. Reeves: I...because...I...I hadn't seen no action up till then and I just felt that if I went home...I told Captain Glassman...you get home; war is over and...like...have a family and my kids as me, "Dad what did you do in the war?"...and I would tell them...have to tell them, "I broke my wrist."

Ed Metzler: Playing volleyball.

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Reeves: And I said, "I...I don't want to do that; I...I want to go."

Ed Metzler: Alright, yeah, I see where you're coming from.

Mr. Reeves: So the next morning...

Ed Metzler: You...although, you don't really know if your left wrist was still broken or not, do you?

Mr. Reeves: It...it was, because I...later on when I got back to Pearl Harbor after I got shot...back to Pearl Harbor...my...my health records caught up with me and the doctor says, "There's...your health records are here and it shows that you have a broken left wrist and....and there's no healing to it yet, so I'm going to have it x-rayed and see what your problem is."

Ed Metzler: I wonder why your...your wrist never healed.

Mr. Reeves: Because I never...used it too much; I just used it all the time and the two broken bones were, you know, was broke right off and...

Ed Metzler: It just never knitted.

Mr. Reeves: It just never knitted.

Ed Metzler: My golly!

Mr. Reeves: So...

Ed Metzler: Now, refresh my memory here. You've probably already told me this...in the 5th Marines...what...what was your role?

Mr. Reeves: Okay, I...I was Platoon Sergeant of the...1st Platoon which had four thirty-seven millimeter anti-tank guns; two thirty caliber machine guns and one fifty caliber machine gun.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Reeves: And (unintelligible)...going on for...four of them were towed a one-ton Dodge pick-up, so there was a truck driver with each one...and each gun was towed with a...a one-ton pick-up.

Ed Metzler: So as Sergeant, where did you ride?

Mr. Reeves: Well we had a jeep also...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Reeves: ...and...but there wasn't much riding really or anything.

Ed Metzler: No.

Mr. Reeves: And when we hit...hit the island (unintelligible) Iwo Jima, there was no riding on it...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Reeves: ...it was...it was strictly everything was infantry.

Ed Metzler: Right, so you left from the big island and went to Iwo Jima, is that correct?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, we went from the big island to Eniwetok...and there we picked up...in Kwajalein...they're together, and we picked up the rest of the convoy and I...I've read that there was five hundred and something ships, and I've read also it was eight hundred ships. But anyway, it was a lot of ships.

Ed Metzler: And so...did you ever actually see that many of them? I mean, what...what did a fleet that size look like?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, it...it looked...you could just...all you could see would be ships. As far as your eye could see, it was ships.

Ed Metzler: My goodness! And so on what...a troop ship again?

Mr. Reeves: Yep, and...and on a troop ship and...

Ed Metzler: When did you find out you were going to Iwo?

Mr. Reeves: After we left Eniwetok, why...they told us that's where we was headed...to Iwo Jima.

Ed Metzler: And you probably didn't know that from anything, did you?

Mr. Reeves: No, we had no idea what it was or where it was, and we had...we had heard...every country has its propaganda and...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...and we'd heard the Japanese said that...they were going to be invaded by Marines and one of the qualifications to get in the Marine Corps you had to have murdered your...one of...your mother or father or both. (laughter) And of course, that was not true!

Ed Metzler: But I guess they believed it; they thought you were tough characters, huh?!

Mr. Reeves: Yes, I think so.

Ed Metzler: Whoa! So what's going through your mind as you're headed to Iwo? Are you happy because now you're going to see some action or you a little bit frightened? What's going through...?

Mr. Reeves: Well, if anybody tells you he wasn't scared, why...he's crazy. But you...you think it's...it's a great thing; the war was going our way and we were fortunate enough in all of the campaigns to...we'd taken Guam; taken Saipan and Tinian and...and here's the other islands...and it just looked like this would be another one...closer to Japan. And I think everybody had the thought in mind...we was on Iwo Jima; we were heading for Japan, and that was far from the truth. But Iwo Jima was...was very...we...we got up that one morning about five o'clock and...seven o'clock...we went over the side of the ship; down the cargo nets into the little landing craft.

Ed Metzler: So what kind of landing craft were these? I know there's all kinds of craft.

Mr. Reeves: There's a little...I...I can't say the name of them now...

Ed Metzler: They weren't the Higgins boats, were they?

Mr. Reeves: Higgins boats, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, aha!

Mr. Reeves: Little Higgins boat; they'd hold about thirty-five, forty people; they crowded them in there. And we went over the side at seven o'clock and eight o'clock the...Navy began shelling the island and...

Ed Metzler: But you didn't have anything but...individual shoulders; where is your equipment? Your pick-up truck; your jeep and all that?

Mr. Reeves: Interesting...the drivers and the pick-ups were in the...on one of the LSTs with the...larger ships.

Ed Metzler: So you were going to what...link up with your equipment once you got on the beach?

Mr. Reeves: Once we got on the beach...and...which never happened because there was no way of getting that stuff off...the...the trucks and the jeeps and all couldn't make it on...on that volcanic ash...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: (Unintelligible) and buried themselves.

Ed Metzler: Too loose and too...

Mr. Reeves: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...everything.

Mr. Reeves: We were supposed to be...we were in reserve, the 26th Marines and...

Ed Metzler: 26th Regiment?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, I'm sorry, 26th Regiment...(unintelligible) reserve, and...

Ed Metzler: And so...excuse me, were you one of the first to go in or...or later on or what?

Mr. Reeves: No, we...we were supposed to land about eleven o'clock, and we didn't land till almost five o'clock...

Ed Metzler: Whoa!

Mr. Reeves: ...the beach was so...the first and second waves hit the beach with no resistance, and so of course they landed very quickly...and just crossed the island. And because it was only nine hundred yards across the island on to

Suribachi...and then when the third and fourth waves hit the beach, why the Japs...come out of their caves and...with their artillery and they'd had it all zeroed in before and they just blasted everything, and...

Ed Metzler: So which way were you?

Mr. Reeves: We were...we probably would have been the eighth or ninth wave.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so the third and fourth waves came in and of course that was the Japanese plan...was to let...let us get on shore and then wipe us out.

Mr. Reeves: Right, and...that was their plan and they did a great job of it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, so before you went in did you know how things were going on shore?

Mr. Reeves: No, we were on shore; we could see that things apparently weren't as good as...we knew we were supposed to land by eleven o'clock and we hadn't...and we just kept circling around out there and of course the Coxswain gave word from the ship, but things weren't going as good as they thought it was.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: And so we landed about five o'clock and we didn't...meet any resistance whatever, we just...poured out of that Higgins boat and climbed up that...

Ed Metzler: So there weren't any barriers as you went in? You...you got to the beach without any problems?

Mr. Reeves: Right, we got to the beach, and Coxswain got the Higgins boat into an area that was nothing...no wrecked Higgins boats or trucks or anything of that sort.

Ed Metzler: Did you see quite a bit of wrecks and...?

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ...and destroyed equipment there when you went in?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, there was a lot of stuff there; it...it was a mess.

Ed Metzler: And I guess a lot dead as well?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, and...because there's no opportunity to get the dead out of there.

Ed Metzler: Right. What's going through your mind at this point?

Mr. Reeves: Just to get on the island, and see...and get to a position where we're supposed to go...because we knew we was in reserve, and if we run into anything...why, we could take care it. But we weren't to look for it. So we all climbed that steep thirty foot high ash and we got up on topside and ran as far and as fast as we could to...from big shell holes and dove into the area we're supposed to be. It had already been secured; so there we were for...when light came.

Ed Metzler: So you're looking for your equipment at this point, huh?

Mr. Reeves: We never give it any thought. Of course our...our Lieutenant was in charge, and there was no equipment and they...wasn't even... 'cause we knew that they...they couldn't get no trucks up...on the island...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...the way it was. And so they...we couldn't get the guns in either, so no way of bringing them in; they were still aboard ship.

Ed Metzler: So what have you got...a rifle and that's it?!

Mr. Reeves: That was it; a rifle and...that's all we had.

Ed Metzler: And all of your mates...they're the same way, huh?

Mr. Reeves: All the same way.

Ed Metzler: No machine guns; no nothing?

Mr. Reeves: We had...we had our machine guns because we carried those.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Reeves: But when the...when the jeeps got there, why then they mounted a fifty caliber onto that, but it wasn't...we didn't use it at that...there was no reason to use it.

Ed Metzler: So you ran and jumped and got in a shell hole?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, and that night we...the Japs dropped mortar shells all night long and...onto the beach and the area that we was on and that night we lost four men...mortar rounds landed in the hole and...just killed them.

Ed Metzler: So they were pretty...pretty accurate then with their fire, huh?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, because they...they had zeroed in on everything; they knew just where to...what range it was and they just zeroed in on it.

Ed Metzler: So, do you know any of these guys?

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, two of them were armors, Sergeant Smith (sp?), and there was...the other armor was a Corporal...and I knew them. But the first day the rifle companies lost a lot of officers and so we being anti-tank unit, we...Lieutenant Skelton was our Platoon Leader and he came to me the first night and said, "Clay, the...the rifle company that lost so many officers...that they're transferring me to one of the rifle companies and...but now I not only would be the acting Platoon Sergeant but I would be acting Platoon Leader also." And we were still in reserve the...the second day and so he...he left, but the first night...the first night there we didn't have to draw any

ammunition because the guys hadn't fired their weapons. But we had to draw rations and we got rations and water and everybody dug in. About ten o'clock why we were ready to go to...bed down for the night. And the way it was you'd be two in a hole and one sleep two hours and one would watch two hours and then you'd trade off. And so, at midnight...was my turn to bed down and I had always prayed all my life as a kid; went to church and I'd always prayed and I prayed a prayer something like this – "Lord, bless Ma and Dad back on the farm and Ken and Fred and their families...that they had families and were not in service, but I had two brothers, Chum and Tough were married and had...both had babies, and if one of us boys needs to be...give his life, may it be me." Well that's not too hard to pray that prayer when you're in San Diego between clean sheets or...or anywheres else aboard ship, but you're on Iwo Jima...may be killed any moment.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: And when I came that part of me...why, I...I hesitated, and I think just for a moment, and then I come to and prayed Lord help me, and I never had satisfaction or peace of...in my mind and my heart...if I...than I did at that time, because I knew that God know it and I know it that I meant it.

Ed Metzler: So that helped you.

Mr. Reeves: That helped me, and I went to sleep and I continued to pray that prayer the rest of my days on Iwo Jima – eight days.

Ed Metzler: Who...who were you sharing the foxhole with?

Mr. Reeves: I'm not sure now; I...I...it's been a long time.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: You forgive me; I can remember guys that were wounded and the guys that were killed, but...

Ed Metzler: Well, that's okay.

Mr. Reeves: ...other things you don't remember.

Ed Metzler: So you got through the first night although there wasn't a whole lot of sleeping I guess with all the mortars, huh?

Mr. Reeves: No, there wasn't too much. And the next day we were still reserve and, of course, Lieutenant Skelton was gone and I was...became the acting Platoon Leader. The third day we were moved up on the front lines and I think the fourth day...it had rained the night before...and it was awfully foggy in the morning and...about five o'clock in the morning I got a telephone call that the Japs had broke through the front lines and we...I was to move my platoon up there to fill a hole, and...

Ed Metzler: This is on the third or the fourth day?

Mr. Reeves: ...be the fourth day.

Ed Metzler: So the second and third days...less casualties than...than the first night, huh?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, and so I...I see...it was awfully foggy and it rained and I see some stragglers coming back from the front and I recognized one of them, Gunny (unintelligible, was not in our platoon but he was...I knew him from the...in the...the anti-tank battalion before. And I ran over to him and he...he was a Gunnery Sergeant and he'd been in the Marine Corps a long time, and he was the guy that I think you'd follow anywhere and I said to him, "How...how's it

going up there, Gunny?" And he never looked up; he never stopped; he just said, "Its hell up there."

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Reeves: So, that wasn't very encouraging to go move up, but I...I took the men and moved up.

Ed Metzler: Are you feeling extra pressure by being the, you know, filling in for the Lieutenant at this point?

Mr. Reeves: No, not...not really because I...I think that you want to have that leadership of privilege if you have it, if possible, and I think that I wanted to prove to the guys that I could do it and I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: And so I took the men and went up about where I thought the front lines was, and then...left them and I moved forward and, of course, I had my carbine and radio and field glasses...

Ed Metzler: So you're up there alone?

Mr. Reeves: Yes. And I moved forward till I thought...trying to find the right or left flank where they broke through. And I walked through the hole and I went probably a hundred yards and...I thought I'd stop; there was a huge boulder there almost the size of a jeep and I thought I'd stop and look through my glasses or get on the radio and find out where it was at.

Ed Metzler: Now is this at night?

Mr. Reeves: No, it was just in the morning about five.

Ed Metzler: Okay, but it's foggy, okay.

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, about six o'clock and I raised the radio up to my mouth to...my face to talk on it; set my elbow on the rock and...we had dungaree jackets...were very loose fitting and we just wore that over a T-shirt and that's what I had on...and well, had the radio up to my face and trying to get through on it and I heard a *zap*, and I was shot at and the bullet made four holes through my jacket when I had my arm...arm up...and to my face...and never touched my flesh at all.

Ed Metzler: Didn't touch you, but...went right through the jacket; four holes!

Mr. Reeves: Four holes!

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Reeves: Foolish, I...I never brought the jacket home or I didn't keep it or I didn't...you just don't even think of those things.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: But anyway, I wiggled around and I ran back where I found the platoon, but then the fog beginning to lift and we found where we were supposed to be and tied in, and we were on the front lines. The 10th of March, uh, the 6th of March I was on the front lines and our...

Ed Metzler: Now we went in on something like the 18th or the 19th of...

Mr. Reeves: (Unintelligible) of February.

Ed Metzler: ...February, right? Yeah, so this is...that's ten plus...that's ten days in February and six days in March. So you've been sixteen days on the island at this point?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, I...I was there twenty-eight days, but the...the 6th of March I got shrapnel in my left arm and...nothing serious to where...I was treated and stayed on duty.

Ed Metzler: So things were going better at this point?

Mr. Reeves: No, we only...no really. I hadn't fired my rifle at this time.

Ed Metzler: Is that right?!

Mr. Reeves: And of all those days I...I just found nothing to shoot at.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: They were in their holes, and it was just to get them out. There were so many caves and so many holes that all we could do was blast them out or burn them out. And that took a lot of time. And the 10th of March I got wounded in the left leg – shrapnel from our own artillery that was...what they called a rolling barrage.

Ed Metzler: So this is friendly fire, huh?

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Goodness!

Mr. Reeves: And I still was treated and stayed on duty. We were sent back probably for rest and relaxation at some time (unintelligible) at that time.

Ed Metzler: So have you lost a lot of men or is this still...are you reasonably intact?

Mr. Reeves: Every...every day we're losing a couple of them.

Ed Metzler: Is that right?

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So snipers...just shrapnel or what?

Mr. Reeves: Usually snipers or one...one of the big things...I had several guys shot in the back.

Ed Metzler: In the back?!

Mr. Reeves: And the Jap...Japanese had what they called spider traps, and they'd burrow a little hole down in the ground and somebody would pile some brush over the top of you and...and then when you went by, why he would pop up out of that hole and shoot you in the back. And of course, usually they'd would all be killed in that, but they would shoot as many as they could...'cause I had probably at least a half a dozen of the guys that was shot in the back and evacuated...those that weren't killed.

Ed Metzler: Goodness! So the shrapnel from a rolling barrage got you on what...what was the date?

Mr. Reeves: The 10th...the 10th of March.

Ed Metzler: That's the 10th of March. But you're still able to stay on duty?

Mr. Reeves: Still stayed on duty.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Reeves: I still had the platoon...

Ed Metzler: So they just...where...what...where...where were you wounded; in the leg or what?

Mr. Reeves: In the left leg...at this...it was the shrapnel.

Ed Metzler: So they just kind of wrapped you up and sew it up and off you go?

Mr. Reeves: It wasn't no sewing to it; it wasn't that bad...it was just was cut and...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Reeves: ...and taped it up and stayed on duty.

(end of tape 1, side A)

Ed Metzler: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Reeves: I had the platoon for twenty or...and aboard ship and the 3rd Division had secured their area and they were going aboard ship. 5th Division had a area...way up on Kitano Point which is way up in the northwest part of the island.

Ed Metzler: Uh-hum, kind of the opposite end from Suribachi.

Mr. Reeves: Yes, and it was about...about two hundred yards wide and eight hundred yards deep, and that's all that hadn't been secured yet. But it was so rocky and stony and it was impossible to bring tanks up. And when the infantry...companies were so weak and so outnumbered that they had no officers and there wasn't much we could do, but the...the 18th of February in the morning...

Ed Metzler: The 18th of March.

Mr. Reeves: ...18th of March, I'm sorry...

Ed Metzler: That's alright.

Mr. Reeves: ...and Captain Glassman called and said that there was some replacements had come ashore and he was sending up a Lieutenant to take over the platoon. And so when he...he got...(unintelligible)...I can't remember his name now, but he came and...and he introduced himself and I asked him what we were supposed to do and he says, "We're in reserve and just stay put." And so we

did and that wasn't too hard to do. And so we stayed in our holes all day long and...

Ed Metzler: Well you probably needed the rest anyhow.

Mr. Reeves: Well some of the guys did, I'm sure. And a long about dusk...why, he says we'll move up and the front lines had moved up about a hundred...a hundred and fifty yards and so we got out of our holes and we ran up as far as we could and as fast as we could and...got to a place where we thought we'd dig in right behind the front line...and there's so many rocks there and so many...so rough terrain that...no poss...no possibility of bringing any tanks up. And so we got to a place where we just piled some rocks around us and I told the men to...I looked the area over real close and be sure that there were no spider traps...and off to my right about a hundred forty yards...forty feet, Private DeRiggi (sp?) come to a spider trap and he says, "There's a Jap in here but I think he's dead." And I yelled at him...I was tying the telephone up...and...again...I yelled at him, "Shoot him anyway!" And he tried to shoot his rifle and it jammed and the Jap startled him and he says, "He's alive!" And Private Adams (sp?) run...was running over there to help shoot him and they both got over the hole, DeRiggi trying to get his weapon to work and Adams ready to shoot him and the Jap blew himself up with...sitting on a case of TNT probably...

Ed Metzler: Good gracious!

Mr. Reeves: ...and blew a hole in the ground that you could put a jeep in. And we didn't find anything of that Jap...other than a part of a blanket and the left arm...that's all we found.

Ed Metzler: Well what about the...what about your guys...were they...?

Mr. Reeves: DeRiggi and Adams were blown back about forty feet and some rocks and dust was falling and almost dark then and we...ran back where DeRiggi and Adams were and Adams was on his knees and bleeding from his face and he couldn't see; he was blinded...and bleeding from his arms and his hands. And DeRiggi was laid on his back in a pile of rocks and he couldn't move and he was bleeding from his hands and face and we yelled, "Corpsman, Corpsman!"...and he didn't come. And so...just a few minutes I'm sure, and finally he came and I asked him where he was and he says...says, "Sergeant Rain (sp?)...was one of the gun commanders...we didn't have no guns with us...weapons or anti-tank guns but he was one of the commanders and says he got hit in the back with a rock and knocked the wind out of him and I was working on him." And I was...I was mad; we got...did everything we could for...to DeRiggi and Adams and evacuated them.

Ed Metzler: You were mad?

Mr. Reeves: I was mad at what happened and I went over to the Lieutenant, and he was a green guy; he...he hadn't been in action before and...and I said to him, "What was we supposed to really be doing today?" And he said, "We were supposed to be mopping up behind the front lines." And I was madder...than ever then, and I got on the phone and I called Captain Glassman and I said, "Captain

Glassman, I don't care what you do with me, but I refuse to move these men any more for this Lieutenant," and I told him what it happened and I hung up. Next morning, six o'clock, I got a phone call that...from Captain Glassman...said, "Reeves, Colonel Pollock (sp?) wants to see you." And I never seen Colonel Pollock before and I thought well, I was going to get court-martialed or something of that sort...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...and so I didn't want to hurry back and get court-martialed and I didn't want to take my time and get shot, so I got back and I found Colonel Pollock and...and he was a little old man...he'd been in the 1st Parachute Battalion which no longer was...existed because they broke it up and put them in the Marine Corps...in the 5th Division. And he said, "Reeves, we're going to go slow. I can't bring tanks up because it's too rocky and we're going to bring up two armored...bull...bulldozers and you're to guide them and make two roads through this two-hundred yard wide stretch and make two roads and when you get done with that, we'll bring the up two tanks up and flamethrowers and they'll spray the area and that's how we're going to move." And he says, "We're shorthanded; we have no officers; we have no men and the guys are tired; they're sick and...we can't...that's the best we can do." And so the two bull...bulldozers came up and I guided them all day long; they had a telephone on the back of them...

Ed Metzler: So why do you think the Colonel called you back there to tell you that?

Mr. Reeves: Because they were so few men because the...the companies probably had a hundred and seventy, eighty, ninety men in a company and they probably were down to...with...with many of them Sergeants and Corporals and Lieutenants and they had no officers anymore and just a few non-comms. And...and...but they was probably a guy that had a platoon before...now had a company and he would be an enlisted man.

Ed Metzler: Uh-hum.

Mr. Reeves: They just...we had nothing, no strengths, nothing...(unintelligible)...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: So four o'clock in the afternoon, why they...bulldozers went as far as they could; they withdrew and we brought (unintelligible) flames from the tanks up. And they sprayed both sides as they went and they went maybe a hundred yards and we advanced with them and we come to a ridge where we wanted to stop and we got to ridge and we all broke over the ridge at the same time; probably a hundred, a hundred and fifty of us and we all broke over this...this ridge at the same time. And we caught...the Japs were dug in and we caught them either...were surprised or sleeping or sick or something and we...we just shot them in oh, probably in thirty seconds and it was all over. And I shot two...right from the hip, probably from eight, ten feet away and I shot two of them. And the guys (static noise in recording)...(unintelligible)...dead bodies in under the holes and they jumped in and this was their line to dig in for. And I come down off the ridge and I was higher than a kite; I thought, "Oh boy!" If somebody had said, "Go down to the other end of the island," then

I...I'd of went. I just thought well, I accomplished so much I thought and I was so high. So the two guys and...and the tank commanders had their hatches opened and they said, "Throw us in some rifles." So I gathered up an armful of rifles and threwed it in each tank and I walked over to the big shell hole where whoever was running the unit...the operation and I stood there like an idiot and I said, "What'd I do now?" And before he could tell me, I was shot through the leg...and right leg...(unintelligible) down...and I rolled over on my back and wiggled my toes and I didn't think that...any bones were broken, but I was in pain I thought. And I began to crawl to safety and...dragging my leg and I crawled probably six or eight feet and I heard a *zap*...a bullet landed right in front of my face in the dirt and he was still shooting at me, so I got up and I ran back to where we...left...uh, started rather...and...a good hundred, hundred and fifty yards...and that was the end. I...I was shot through a leg and...I knew I was done in. I stopped and saw Captain Glassman and told him what had happened and he said, "Why, when we get back to Hawaii, I'm going to put you up for a field commission – Second Lieutenant." And I...

Ed Metzler: How'd you feel about that?

Mr. Reeves: Oh, I felt good about that. I thought that...because I had no education or no way possible I could ever get to that other than shooting (unintelligible). And I stopped back...anti-tank guns were in the middle of the island and I had four boys that cracked up so I...other than turn them in for...as casualties, I used them...left them with anti-tank guns to watch over...to guard them...I stopped

and saw those guys and I walked back to the first part of the...first part of the airfield...almost to Suribachi...and...which would be probably five miles.

Ed Metzler: All of this on your wounded leg?!

Mr. Reeves: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Heavens!

Mr. Reeves: And I got there; it was dark...and I went to a field hospital there at...the first airfield and they gave me a bunk to sit down on. Ten o'clock, why, doctor treated me and I went to sleep. Next morning I got up and...a cargo plane had landed and brought...unloaded its cargo from Guam...was going back to Guam and...they said, "Well, we're going to evacuate you." And Colonel Pollock got shot in the arm and...and...the same afternoon. And he went...the two of us got on the plane and went back to Guam. And I was in Guam then for a week and then got a hospital ship to...Pearl Harbor and was there at the hospital there for probably two or three weeks.

Ed Metzler: So are you healing okay?

Mr. Reeves: And my leg was healing and no problem; I was a walking casualty...I could walk. It hurt but I could walk and I could stand and I could dress (unintelligible) though I wasn't hospitalized or anything...in the bed...and my health records caught up with me and doctor called me down to his office and said, "Reeves, your health records are here and says you've got a broken left wrist and doesn't say that it has healed so...send you down for x-rays." And sent me down for x-rays and come back with them and he looked at them and says, "It's broken; I'm going to send you home...and...put a cast on your arm

and sent you home.” And I told him that I was...what I had done and what Captain Glassman said that if I returned to the unit I could...would be...get a field commission. And he says, “I’m the doctor and you’re going home.” And so I got a plane the next day and went to Oakland, California; was there a week and then went to Great Lakes Naval Hospital and...from there I was discharged. Oh, and I...I...the war ended then when I was home. And I went back to Great Lakes and the doctor wanted to know was it...whether to put a cast on my arm or whether to...surgery or what and I said, “Just send me back to (unintelligible)...get out of here.” And so they sent me to Cherry Point, North Carolina and there I was...probably a week...so when...and...I was discharged on October 2nd, 1945.

Ed Metzler: So do you wish you could have gone back?

Mr. Reeves: Now that the war was over I didn’t...never entered my mind too much.

Ed Metzler: But I mean to...to get that field commission?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, I...I thought of that many times and I’ve thought of it since I was...since I’ve been home, I think of it many times, and...but...now...Captain Glassman’s dead and...and Cap...and Lieutenant Skelton is dead and Corporal Gelardi (sp?) is dead...Corpsman Gelardi...they’re all dead. I did inquire about it but they said, “Well if you can get an officer to write a recommendation, why we would consider it.”...but they’re all dead.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, so that’s history, isn’t it?

Mr. Reeves: That’s history now.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Do you think about that very often?

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, I...I started to think about it...I'm thinking about it now and I will until after February 19th 'cause...every year...I...I want...that time comes around and I think about it and I think of the guys that was killed and couldn't come back and it...it's hard for me to realize...'cause I got shot through the leg standing up...and Sergeant Sufferage (sp?) was one of my good friends...was shot through the head and killed instantly...crawling on his hands and knees and did some water from one of the Lister bags and...that...that's hard to...and Corporal Ardoin (sp?) was shot and killed and...it's just to...you think of those guys...and...because they never come off the island.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, well a lot of the guys didn't, did they?

Mr. Reeves: No, an awful lot of them.

Ed Metzler: And there's no understanding how it happened or why it happened the way it does.

Mr. Reeves: No, it...as I think back now I...I wondered why anybody made it because I know that I've went...I haven't went for the last few years because of my health, but I've went to the Marine Corps...uh, 5th Marine Division reunions for several years and...they...they all wear base...baseball caps with the 5th Marine Division...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...Iwo Jima survivor on the back of it.

Ed Metzler: Right. Did you enjoy those sessions?

Mr. Reeves: Oh yes, very much.

Ed Metzler: Do they still have them?

Mr. Reeves: They still have them, but they're getting pretty old.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Reeves: And where they used to have them...kind of would...handle them...they...they don't...they have some company now that does it that puts on the whole program for them.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that and the younger generation, you know, the children and the grandchildren held, too, that's been my observation.

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, but it...its...oh, probably...I...I come home and I got...I got married; I didn't have no girlfriend when I was in the service and when I got home I met a girl and I married her and we had five kids of our own and we had...we adopted five kids, so we had ten.

Ed Metzler: Well, that's a big family!

Mr. Reeves: Yes, and...the ones we adopted were the older ones and they were...eight, nine or ten when we adopted them, so...just get them through high school and that was it. One of them went into the Marine Corps and one of them went in the Navy and...but at that time I didn't say much about the war; I got the Silver Star out of it.

Ed Metzler: And a Purple Heart.

Mr. Reeves: And a Purple Heart with two gold clusters. (recording static)...(unintelligible)...

Ed Metzler: Uh, Clay, let me...you know I've got a bad connection here, I'm getting static; I'm going to stop this. I'm going to call you again to make...to try and get a better line...

Mr. Reeves: Okay.

Ed Metzler: ...so I'll be back to you in just a few...just a few seconds, okay?

Mr. Reeves: Okay, I can hear you well.

Ed Metzler: Okay, I'm just getting some...some real...well now it's quit.

Mr. Reeves: Well...

Ed Metzler: Well maybe we'll try and keep going then; I just...it...I don't want to loose any of this so...well, when you came back and were discharged from the service, was all of this horrible episode still on your mind a lot or did you sleep well at night or how did it affect you?

Mr. Reeves: Oh, I'll tell you; I read so much about and hear so much about guys having trauma and nightmares and they...they can't sleep, and they wake up in a sweat and so on but like I told you I always prayed a lot. And when I came home and got onto it, I...I prayed that..., "Lord, help me that I wouldn't have that kind of a problem," and I never really have had one. I think about it, but nothing like having any great trauma about it or upsetting me or anything of that sort.

Ed Metzler: Well that's good news!

Mr. Reeves: Yes, it's...but I...I think that it isn't because of me, it...it's because of what God can do for you. And that's the way I felt about it.

Ed Metzler: I...I'm going to...hold...hold the line; I'm going to call you back. So just hang by the phone and hang it up and I'm going to call you back; I'm having problems from this end.

Mr. Reeves: Okay.

Ed Metzler: Okay. (Call resumes after hanging up and recalling Mr. Reeves.)

Ed Metzler: Starting the recorder again, Clay.

Mr. Reeves: I'm trying another phone here so maybe that might have been it.

Ed Metzler: Well, okay; it's possible. Okay, so you've not been troubled with nightmares and that kind of thing and you attribute that go...well the healing power of your prayer.

Mr. Reeves: Right.

Ed Metzler: Okay. How do you feel about the Japanese as a people and what have you today, and how did you feel when you...when you were...when you came home from the war?

Mr. Reeves: Well, I'll tell you; I...I had mixed emotions about it. I...on the island...of course you...you're there to kill anybody that...or you get killed...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...and as I...one night...almost dark...I was tying in a telephone and it was so rocky that we (unintelligible) rocks around us...and somebody...it's getting near dark and it's probably fifteen, twenty of us left and you put a machine gun on each end but you didn't use it...to expose yourself...and somebody yelled, "There's a Jap out in front!" So everybody began shooting their rifles and they shot him; everybody says, "I got him, I got him, I got him!" But...but then it's dark and you couldn't see where he was, so next morning when it got daylight he laid out in front of us and somebody went out and rolled him over and...he had a flag wrapped around his chest; in his pocket was a picture of his family; mother and father, and he didn't have no rifle;

didn't have no weapon of any kind; he had just a tin pail trying to get some water, and...we killed him. And it...when you're there you don't think much about it, but I thought much about it since. And I shot two guys right through the back of the head as they were crawling out of the hole; I didn't give that much thought. I captured two Japs...was crawling out of a hole that had been blown shut with a satchel charge and I captured them...and don't give them much thought. But now that I'm home, I have no ill feelings towards them; they were doing what they felt they were told to do and I guess we did what we were told to do. I feel sorry for the guys today that are in Iraq because they don't know who their...their enemy is. They can be friends today, but when night comes tonight, they might shoot you.

Ed Metzler: Right! That wasn't a problem where you were?

Mr. Reeves: No.

Ed Metzler: At least you knew who the enemy was.

Mr. Reeves: Right, but we didn't see...I didn't see one...I didn't fire my rifle for twenty...twenty-eight days.

Ed Metzler: Isn't that amazing!

Mr. Reeves: It's a wonder it...it fired because...it did. (laughter)

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it's a wonder it hadn't rusted over, huh?

Mr. Reeves: Well, dirt...the dirt and the dust...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, absolutely! What an incredible story. How...How did this experience change you as a person?

Mr. Reeves: Well, I was quite proud of what I...I did because...and I...I got the Silver Star when I got home, so I didn't know whether I...I didn't even know I was supposed to get that. But I know I'd been wounded three times and I expected...some time to get the Purple Heart; I expected that. But when I got home, I just wanted to get on with my life and...and forget about what was...happened. And...there was no...there was all kinds of opportunities, but there was a lot of shortages...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...'cause they...you couldn't buy a car for years. When I'd...I lived at home with my mother and dad...for the first part of the year, and I told my mother one spring morning...spring afternoon rather...we were out working in the yard and I says, "Ma, I'm going to get married," and she says, "Now why are you going to do that?" And I was twenty-four years old! (laughter) "Why are you going to do that; why don't you buy as car instead?" (laughter) Well...

Ed Metzler: She was still giving you advice, huh?!

Mr. Reeves: Yep!

Ed Metzler: Well, that's what mothers do!

Mr. Reeves: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Oh my goodness! Were you in fairly close contact with them or were you able to get letters and send letters when you were overseas and did they know you were okay or not?

Mr. Reeves: They didn't; I came home...the battle was over on Iwo Jima and I came home on my first furlough and I got into (unintelligible) with...a very central

railroad at that time and I had to walk down to where my brother lived in town. I had to walk probably ten, fifteen blocks and he wasn't home but with my...his wife...came to the door and she hugged me and she said,
“(Unintelligible) I thought you were dead!”

Ed Metzler: Really?

Mr. Reeves: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ‘Cause I guess they knew you were at Iwo and they knew how tough Iwo was.

Mr. Reeves: The thing of it is...there was thousands of casualties...

Ed Metzler: Right...man! Well...

Mr. Reeves: That's a long time ago, so it...it don't...it just don't seem like it's much to it anymore.

Ed Metzler: But I must say...it's still burned in your memory, isn't it?

Mr. Reeves: Oh yes.

Ed Metzler: Well your memory seems crystal clear.

Mr. Reeves: Well...

Ed Metzler: Probably for all the wrong reasons because it was such a horrible thing, but...

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Well, I guess all I can say from my end and I'll say it for my generation and subsequent generations, we're in your debt. Thank you for what you did.

Mr. Reeves: Well I appreciate that and it's...you know, I...I get...I...I've tried...I told you when I went in the Marine Corps then...I might not be the best Marine there ever was, but I'd be the best one that I could be.

Ed Metzler: And you feel that you accomplished that, I see.

Mr. Reeves: I feel that I accomplished that, and I also have tried to do the same thoughts in my life today. And I...I'm old now; I'm 85 years old and I had a garage and I've retired from that because I've had heart surgery twice and...but anyway...go to rehab at one of the hospitals here...and today an old guy came up to me and I didn't know who he was. He said, "Reeves, I want to thank you for what you did sixty-two years ago!" That makes you feel good!

Ed Metzler: Durn right! Yeah, and it should, and that's good. I'm glad people can say that; we don't do that enough.

Mr. Reeves: It's kind of amazing to me that you...that you're doing this because it's...it's quite an...takes a lot of your time to...

Ed Metzler: Well, that's...I come out much richer just hearing you guys talk, so...it's fine with me. It's...it's privilege.

Mr. Reeves: Well good.

Ed Metzler: Well, what else can we talk about, Clay? What else comes to your mind? What can we get down here on tape while we still got you on the phone?

Mr. Reeves: Oh I don't know. I...I...I was there twenty-eight days, and I could almost go day by day...

Ed Metzler: You sure can!

Mr. Reeves: ...on what happened. And I...I've left out a lot of things and a lot of things that I...happened that...I haven't even mentioned.

Ed Metzler: Why is that?

Mr. Reeves: Well one...I don't know...just...because there's so many of them.

Ed Metzler: Yes.

Mr. Reeves: We were sent back at one time...probably after we'd been on the island for fifteen days; we come off the front lines and sent back for rest and relaxation and reorganization and the area they sent us back to...Captain Glassman says, "Go back there and...and reorganize and relax and...for a couple of days." And so we got back there and there was probably ten, twelve dead Japanese bodies...was there and...and they'd been there several days and they smelled terrible. And the guys said, "Well, we can't stay here." And so I called him back and he says, "Well, take and bury them." Now when the Marines were...were shot, if they were killed...if they weren't killed they were evacuated as...immediately...if they were killed they were evacuated as soon as possible. But the Jap bodies stayed there until...somebody buried them, and so we found an old stretcher and the guys started throwing...one of them big shell hole...and we thought we'd throw the bodies in there and then cover them up...and they found an old stretcher and they threw a couple in...the guys were throwing up...everybody was...myself included and French Ardoin who was killed a couple of days after that...he wasn't throwing up and I asked him, "How come," and he says, "I'm chewing plug tobacco."

Ed Metzler: He said what now?

Mr. Reeves: He says, "I'm chewing plug tobacco." And he says, "If you keep spitting, you won't throw up." So we all took a chew of his plug and sure enough...we kept spitting and we...we didn't throw up.

Ed Metzler: I'll be darned!

Mr. Reeves: And that...we...there was ten bodies there and somebody found an old...old piece of cardboard and...and they wrote on there, "Ten poor Japs buried here". We thought we'd put them all in one hole and filled some loose dirt over them from the shell hole and that was where they were buried. It must have been later on...with those kind of graves, it must have been a terrible mess...I would think.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Have you ever been to Japan?

Mr. Reeves: Have I what?

Ed Metzler: Have you ever been to Japan...?

Mr. Reeves: No.

Ed Metzler: ...after the war?

Mr. Reeves: No, I...I didn't make it to Japan; the unit went to Japan, but I...I didn't make it because I was in the hospital.

Ed Metzler: Right, you were wounded...for the third time! My goodness. Well let me go back and ask you a little bit more about an earlier part of your story...just to kind of go back to the early part.

Mr. Reeves: Okay.

Ed Metzler: You mentioned that you were in New Zealand for six to eight months.

Mr. Reeves: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Tell me what your impression was of New Zealand; the people; what happened there?

Mr. Reeves: Well as we said, most of the men...the men of military age were in...were in the army...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...and they were in Africa. So there was not many men there, but many...lot of women...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...it was near Wellington...a camp called Paekakariki

Ed Metzler: Good gracious! How do you spell that?

Mr. Reeves: It's terrible, I couldn't spell it...(unintelligible)...

Ed Metzler: Okay! (laughter)

Mr. Reeves: And that...that's a camp where the 2nd Marine Division were...had been...and about forty miles from Wellington. So when the guys got liberty and went into Wellington, why, they had a lot of opportunity to...to go on liberty. Listen, I'm going to get the other phone; I can't hear very good on this one.

Ed Metzler: Okay, okay, I'll just hold.

Mr. Reeves: Are you there?

Ed Metzler: I'm here.

Mr. Reeves: Okay.

Ed Metzler: Alright, well, well...okay...so liberty into Wellington.

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, I...I didn't go very much because I...I had no...I went two or three times, but some of the guys went every weekend, but I didn't go very much. I did go once...to Wellington and I went with a guy by the name of Stinson (sp?)...he'd...

Ed Metzler: Benson?

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, Stinson.

Ed Metzler: Stinson, okay.

Mr. Reeves: Michael E. Stinson; he was the...he went to college at the University of Montana and had two years there and was (unintelligible) on the football team. And he later became a...a Lieutenant...Second Lieutenant; never did go overseas with us to...to Iwo Jima, but he became a Second Lieutenant. I went in to liberty with him; he'd been married and of course we just went to liberty for...to go to a show or...that's about all he could do.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Reeves: And of course they didn't have...instead of hamburgers and hotdogs, why, they had meat pies and...

Ed Metzler: Mutton and that kind of stuff.

Mr. Reeves: ...never cared for that too much, so...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Reeves: ...we...we...the people there were very friendly, very good. A lot of the guys married women there and then picked them up after the war. Some didn't; they married them and never...some of them didn't survive. But they were...they were very gracious people...that...they appreciated our being there because of their safety.

Ed Metzler: Right! They were concerned.

Mr. Reeves: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Reeves: And probably Australia was the same, I would assume.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, okay. What else comes to mind? Some of those experiences that you didn't tell me first time through here?

Mr. Reeves: Well, it...it's kind of hard now to...

Ed Metzler: Well, I know.

Mr. Reeves: ...come up with...

Ed Metzler: But if...I...I mean...and of course it's impossible to remember all of the things that happened on just one interview, but I must say, it's a riveting story and I appreciate your recounting it for me.

Mr. Reeves: It...it's kind of a...the...you can't image the losses that...that were there. Six thousand guys were killed...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...and...a thousand were dead the first day and that...that kind of...the way the news media is today was...the war in Iraq and all that's been going on there in Afghanistan for...four or five years and...

Ed Metzler: And they've got one half the losses...

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, they've got (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: ...that...that we had in a couple of weeks.

Mr. Reeves: And CNN puts on...when there's a couple of guys killed and...and now there's been three thousand so many...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...killed in...in Iraq. And...and (unintelligible) thousand...(unintelligible) killed; the war had been going on for about three years, and it...it kind of rankled to...to...that the news media would complain about...nobody wants

to get killed; I can understand that, too. There's no...you...you don't want to...no...nobody thinks he...he's the one that's going to get killed.

Ed Metzler: Right; that's absolutely right.

Mr. Reeves: Everybody thinks that you may get killed, but I won't.

Ed Metzler: Right. Well, thank goodness you made it through.

Mr. Reeves: The Lord's been good to me; I've had much to be thankful for. I've...I'm 85 now and I've got a lot of...got a good wife. Our health isn't good, but we're doing well, and the ten kids are...they...they're doing well.

Ed Metzler: That's great!

Mr. Reeves: And...

Ed Metzler: Sounds like you have a big and a strong family!

Mr. Reeves: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And that helps!

Mr. Reeves: And I got a lot of friends.

Ed Metzler: And...

Mr. Reeves: And I...I go places; I...I was coming into the Marine Corp League for several years; it was supposed to be one year...in and out, but (unintelligible)...weeks...it wasn't much going on...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Reeves: ...so I took it over and we moved from fifteen members to up in the sixties.

Ed Metzler: Well that's good! And I believe you told me when I was talking to you earlier that you had been interviewed and parts of your interview were on a show on the History channel.

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So there's recognition there, too, and I'm so pleased for that.

Mr. Reeves: If...if you wanted, I could send you one of those tapes.

Ed Metzler: Is it a...what is it...a video tape?

Mr. Reeves: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Do you have extra copies?

Mr. Reeves: Yes, because...I have extra copies because when I was coming out of the Marine Corps League...this would be probably five, six years ago...when the History channel has that on...and somebody says, "Well, why don't we use it for a fund raiser?" So I did and I had two hundred copies made and...which we sold. And I just found fifty more copies...

Ed Metzler: Fifty more?!

Mr. Reeves: Yeah, I hadn't even noticed that...that were here; they're upstairs in a...

Ed Metzler: Well I tell you what, if you would send me one...what I will do is I will include it along with the tape that we are doing...

Mr. Reeves: That would be fine.

Ed Metzler: ...and we'll put it in the archives of the Museum along with the tape and the transcript of the tape, and that would...that would be a nice addition!

Mr. Reeves: Good, I...I'll send it and I want to be sure now that I've got your address...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Reeves: ...send it...so I want to take a minute to find that so...

Ed Metzler: Okay. Well I'll tell you what I'm going to do.

Mr. Reeves: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: I'm going to stop the tape here and then I...I'll pass that address on to you after I stop the tape. So I'm going to go ahead and stop the tape and thanks for sharing your experiences and...

(end of interview)

FINAL copy
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