

This interview is being conducted on Barry Chism.

Let's start with the beginning of your life.

When were you born?

Mr. Chism: I was born on May 21, 1925, about a mile and a half south of here in Greenbrier, Tennessee and I haven't been afar from this spot forever.

With the exception of going to war...

Mr. Chism: Well that was not voluntary, but I did go. I was kind of hoping and kind of hoping and kind of thinking that the war was going to end before I got into it because of my age. I was drafted a twenty-five year old man and pretty soon they dropped it down to a twenty-one year man and I thought that I was still in pretty good shape. I wasn't twenty-one yet but I was still in high school. I believe it was in 1942 that they dropped the draft age down to eighteen. But they guaranteed you; supposedly, a year's training before you go overseas. That was in the bill that passed by our lawmakers at that time. No person under the age of nineteen would be sent overseas. I still thought I was in pretty good shape. So I did manage to graduate from high school, then the draft got me. I wound up beginning to take basic training at Fort McClellan, Alabama. But first they pick you up and send you to what is called a reception center. I don't know why they call those things reception centers. We didn't get such a good reception there. I thought it was supposed to be a real welcome, but it was, "Hey you, do this and do that!" But anyway it was a reception center at Fort _____, Georgia. There they gave you all kinds of test for things I have never heard of. They test you to see if you are good at a job and if you are good at. I made a real good grade on some of those test. I was just out of high school. I made better grades than some of the people that had been out of school for several years. I turned down the chance to go into the Air Force and I turned down the Navy because I made a grade on test and I'm really not even sure which one it was. It was a general intelligence test I guess. If you made as much as 110, then you were qualified for OCS but I didn't pick it off that easy. If you made as much as 115, then you automatically was qualified for ASTP or Army Special Training Program which I had heard a little bit about. I knew there was such a thing. I had made a little over 115 on the test. I made 117 on the test. So I went before a panel of, there was a Colonel, a Captain and a First Lieutenant, for an interview. They were very nice people and it was a pretty good interview and they explained to me what that program was. They took young men who had made a certain grade on this test and you had a chance to go to any and of course they picked the place where there was an opening and they said chances are I could get Vanderbilt University which was twenty minutes from here. That was fine. What they would do you would be paid Army pay and you would be given either a housing allowance or you would be housed there on the University. You could take, probably there would be more tests to determine what you were best suited for but they offered most everything in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine, law, and they offered most everything in engineering. I said, "Yeah I want that." They said, "Okay, we will let you know. But you have got to take basic training." You have to take basic training in whatever you do in the Army. That is just one of those things that they got in the habit of. That was fine I didn't mind basic training. So I went to Fort McClellan, Alabama and took my basic training. What I took was basic infantry replacement training. Now replacement is a substitute as you can

imagine. What it is is you were trained a little bit in every weapon that your infantry groups would use. You just got a good basic knowledge of it. We trained with a regular M1 Rifle, we trained with carbine, we trained with a light 30-caliber machine gun, we trained with 60-millimeter mortar, and we had some bazooka training, demolition, and map reading. That was the basics either way. Some allied subjects in between I'm sure and tactics. They kept us pretty busy. We moved into some old World War I barracks which wasn't all that great. But that didn't make any difference, they was clean.

Being in replacement, you had to learn how to use just about every weapon.

Mr. Chism: I did not know what weapon I was going to be called on to use. I left out the main thing. They taught us in dawning automatic rifles. What they did of course was at the beginning of the war, the military relied heavily on the National Guard Divisions. A lot of states had National Guard. I wound up and we'll talk about this later, in the 34th Infantry Division which is a National Guard out there from Iowa. They also rose up many other infantry divisions. They were full strength and they sent them overseas. Well what happened when they got down to half strength, when they lost half their men, or 1/3 of their men, or 10-15 percent of their men. They did not pull that division out of the line and reorganize and bring them back up to strength, retrain them and then move back. They did some of that in World War I. But they decided they wouldn't do that anymore. What they would do was when a division got so low with men; they would actually requisition more men just like they would requisition ammunition. We need X number of men and they didn't specify what they were trained for because they would come from this pool of infantry replacements. That is what I had and that is what I did. At the end of ninety days our training ended. I said, "What happened to that years training we were going to get?" They said, "Well you got a year's training, it just takes ninety days now to get your years training." That is the only explanation I had gotten. There were three of us in this company; a boy from Memphis and a boy from Nashville and myself. We felt like we had it made. All these folks that were going overseas, we were going back to Nashville or somewhere and we were going to get us a good education. We were going to be a big lawyer or somebody. When I asked about that, they said, "Well, haven't you heard?" That usually means bad news.

Your luck ran out.

Mr. Chism: That was bad news. They said that program was full. We were supposed to have been notified I guess. But that program was full. They couldn't carry any more in that program. He said, "We'll let you know." In other words, don't call us, we'll let you know. I never heard from him again.

Yeah now that you have already turned down the Air Force and the Navy and some other things....

Mr. Chism: I had turned down the choice of going to bomber school and navigator school in the Air Force which was Air Corp, the branch of the Army at that time. I didn't want that particularly. To look back that would have been a sweet deal I guess. I didn't take that. I could not get into pilots training school because I had a history somewhere way back in my childhood called asthma. If I didn't have it then I don't know what they have done with me. I was

disqualified right quick. I don't guess they wanted a man flying those planes that gets to where he couldn't breathe.

All you were left with then was your majoring in Infantry.

Mr. Chism: I knew just exactly where I was going to go. In the infantry I did not know what theater of operation I was going to. I had much preferred going to the European area and I did get that. I, of course, did not go into the islands down in the Pacific theater. I had always read a whole lot about Europe and I thought at least I could see something over there. I got what they called a, I hadn't been home, and they gave me....we left there not in a group; we left there as individuals and I was given orders and a lot of the others were too. But I didn't know what other people's orders were. We were going to Fort Meade, Maryland. They gave me a train ticket and five or six days before Fort Meade, Maryland, they put us on a truck and carried us to Birmingham. It was after dark and we caught a train to Nashville. That would be to where I would come to. The rest of these men; a lot of these men went to Memphis and a quite of few to Nashville. Another segment of the training company was made up Virginia and West Virginia and of course they went on a separate direction. Most all of us really wound up at Fort Meade. Some forty-five went to _____ Australia. Most of them wound up in General MacArthur's headquarters. They had a sweet deal. Some of them were never issued a rifle after they left Fort McClellan.

Your luck had run out when you didn't get that position.

Mr. Chism: My luck had run out, and I shouldn't say that because I am sitting here today when so many are not. We got to Birmingham and here came the train. I had a duffel bag and the only place like that that was in the isle and my stuff on the duffel bag from Birmingham to Nashville on the train. My dad was waiting at the depot and I came home and stayed I guess about four or five days. I had to leave on a Sunday morning to go to Fort Meade, Maryland. I guess that was the lowest day that I can remember. I knew where I was going. Mom and dad didn't know what the situation was. I told them I would miss the school and that was it. I didn't tell them anything. They carried me on Sunday morning to the depot in Nashville. Of course they were all behind the train say; there were fifteen engines sitting on there and soldiers by the hundreds in there. The train didn't leave for ten or fifteen minutes and I thought well we will all walk down here and I knew where the train was, what the name of the train was and so forth. I was going from Nashville to Cincinnati and then I had to change to Baltimore and Ohio rail lines. Well I thought we would all go down to the train but during war time they had put a big iron fence around that place. If you had a train ticket you could go down to the train and if you didn't have a ticket you didn't go to the trains. Security I guess. I remember going through that gate and hearing that gate slam behind me and I never did turn around. That was a low day. I got on that train and of course I knew nobody on that train. We pulled in several hours later in Cincinnati and I had a four hour layover in Cincinnati. There was a great big depot in Cincinnati and when we got off that train there was military everywhere. I didn't know a soul. That is a lonely feeling being dumped in a place where you didn't know a soul and had nobody to contact anybody else. Your it and if you can't handle it then what do you do? Well, I was walking away from the platform there and somebody reached out and grabbed my arm. I turned around and it was an old boy that used to live here in Greenbrier. It was an MP there. He was a little bit older than I was. He had been in a

year before I did and he got an MP job. I don't know whether he went overseas or not. I talked to him a few minutes and he said, "Well I get off duty here in about thirty minutes so just hang around here and we'll go get something to eat." He stayed with me nearly those four hours that night. It made the time pass over a lot quicker. But anyway, I caught the train on into Maryland and went to Fort George G. Meade which was halfway between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. I wasn't there for very long until about three or four days. I found out that the whole bunch that I knew had gone that same route. They had caught different trains and had gone different ways and so forth. I wound up with a lot that I didn't know. I ran in to quite a few that I did know that I took basic training with. As a matter of fact, one of them was a boy here from _____ that I have known for years and we went through the whole war together and came back. I came back a little before him. He died two or three years ago. At Fort Meade we just stayed in the area. We had very little to no training and such there. It was just getting ready to go. Two or three funny little things I remember was several of us got a pass to go into Washington, D.C. We went to a Chinese restaurant and ran across a boy or two. I had never been to a Chinese; there wasn't very many Chinese restaurants in Greenbrier. We had run across a guy from Pulaski, Tennessee. He was kind of prone to drink a little bit. We went in and I guess there was about seven or eight of us and we went in there and sat down to order some lunch; meanwhile he got up to do something. I guess to go to the restroom. He got up and he kind of staggered into these tables that had all these fancy sauces on it that you put on the Chinese food and turned it over. Well there was the meanest looking fellow that came out there that I ever saw and threw us out. He said he didn't want anybody in there. He didn't want any soldiers in there. He didn't want any drunks in there at all. Well I wasn't drunk. I didn't drink and hadn't had a drink in forever. But anyway, I was in the group so out we went. He told us, he said, "If I ever see you again I am going to kill you." This guy was mad. We didn't mean to irritate him, but we must have. He was a great big guy that weighed about 240. We ran across him overseas. It was strange. We stayed at Fort Meade I don't remember now; fifty-five or sixty years makes a big difference in your memory. One night they said, "Okay let's go." We got on a train and went to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia. I had never heard of the place before and it was just a swamp. That was a staging area. We never stayed in there. No training, no nothing. We just sat there until the boat showed up. We stayed there several days and then one day it was, "Okay, lets go!" Trucks had gone down Hampton Road, Virginia. Camp Patrick Henry was not far from Hampton Road; maybe about four or five miles. I think Camp Patrick Henry maybe was down on the James River. There was a brand new troop transport there called the Simon S. Butler. It was a new one. The first time it had been to sea was a _____ shakedown cruise through Venezuela and back just to see if everything worked I guess. It held about seventy-five to eight thousand troops. It was a huge thing. That was all it was built for was troop transport. We stayed two days on that before sailing. They were still doing some maintenance on the thing. They were painting the decks. They needed someone to work in a bakery. That was an involuntary job but I wished I could have shifted to bakery. I worked in the bakery for two days. I'm not a baker but it didn't take a baker to do what I did. I opened those big old hot ovens and reached in there with a boat paddle and pulled out those big trays that had bread in there and had some big gloves to pull them out and let them cool enough and I would put them on racks. I worked in the bakery for two days but when that ship got on the waves I was afraid I would get so sick that I would fall in one of those ovens. I never was so sick in my life. I never had been on a big boat like that at all. Most of us got sick, so they got a bunch of the Navy guys and sent them up there to the bakery. So we just sat down there to our bunks. The bunks were eighteen inches above the other. We

were just sat on a shelf basically. I made it fine just as long as I was still and I could do that a long time. But sooner or later you have got to go to the bathroom. That was your downfall because that was in the front end of the boat; the one I went to and it was the only one I had ever found. It brought a whole lot more than the rest of the place. That was misery; sick my lord. I was glad to get off of that thing. We were on it for I believe nine days. This ship took the southern route to Africa, which means it dropped down south to the southern coast of the United States a little bit and headed east into Africa and up the African coast. It made a zigzag course and changed course every twelve minutes to keep the Nazi sub from getting sights on the ship. I assume that was right. The northern route from the United States usually went out of Camp Shanks, New York or Fort Dix, New Jersey, which went up north of New Foundland and there were new boats up there waiting for them. The same week that I sailed from Hampton Road, Virginia, a friend of mine from Greenbrier went on a cruise ship and sailed out of Fort Dix, New Jersey. That ship was torpedoed and sunk and every one of them, I reckon most of them lost their lives, including this man here. That disturbed my family quite a bit because they knew I was on my way overseas. When that big cruise ship sank headed in that direction they were sure I was on there.

They didn't know which one you were on?

Mr. Chism: They had no idea which one I was on and if I could have wrote and told them it would have been faster. But we landed in Casablanca in a little town called Castel which is a little south of Casablanca. We were there several days and caught a freight train. A little narrow gauged French raider that I bet was built in the early 1900's. The engine didn't even have a stoker on it. They had to hand fire into that engine. In the French Army they had a big Bengali. He was about 6'6" with a huge arm from handling these coal shovels. He was a big black-headed man with the prettiest teeth I ever saw. He was strong as an ox. We would stop the train sometimes and pick at him and talk to him a little bit but we didn't speak any of his language at all. He would come out and grin but that was all. We would give him a few cigarettes. After six days and nights across the desert we got into where were finally going; Algiers. On the train we ate c-rations which wasn't real good under any circumstance; but out in the desert and the heat and riding in one of those trains on that rough railroad it was giving _____. It wasn't much better than that boat. The water we drank was in what they call a lister bag which was a rubberized bag. It held about probably forty gallons. They had it tied to the ceiling of a boxcar and had little spigots around. We drank out of canteen cups. That water was a little bit better that lukewarm. The train at times would get so slow that we would jump off the boxcar and run along the side of it. You did that late in the afternoon after the temperature dropped. We slept in the desert after we got to Algiers we slept in the sand. It got cold in the desert, extremely cold. The humidity was so low that when the cool air ca me in off of the Mediterranean it would cool down real quick. When the sun went down it was cold.

Where exactly did your ship dock out there?

Mr. Chism: It docked in Canastel. Actually it was a fruit company dock. It was a big long medal building all over there where they loaded fruit I assume from Africa. I believe somebody said it was a united fruit company dock there that we used. That is where we went in. It was just a little bit south of Casablanca. Casablanca was one of the larger cities.

So then from there you had to get on a train.

Mr. Chism: We stayed there several days. But then we got on a train. We went to a place out in the desert and stayed there several days, called Lime Mountain. I guess because they made lime. While we were there, a C-47 flew in to the top of Lime Mountain full of paratroopers that was doing some training I guess. Of course it killed every one of them. There was all this debris just scattered. We could see them in the distance; we weren't that close to them. We could see the debris scarred all over that mountain. From there in due process, we went to Italy.

Now did you do any actual fighting or any combat in Africa?

Mr. Chism: The Tunisian Campaign had ended when I got in there.

It had already ended?

Mr. Chism: Not a lot of infantry in the division I eventually went to got chopped all to pieces at the ___ Pass. It was basically a war of armor and artillery in Africa. The United States and Great Britain were very much concerned about keeping the Nazi's out of Egypt. If they had gotten control of Egypt then they would control the Suez Canal and would have greater control of the Mediterranean than they had. The only way they could get into the Mediterranean was to come through the Strait of Gibraltar and that is about nine miles wide. They had a hard time; they lost a lot of ships coming through the Gibraltar. I can tell you this much. Hitler came to Spain in 1940 and wanted Spain to invade Gibraltar which was on the British and then give the Nazi's access to the Straits so they could go straight on through. Well Spain wouldn't do it. Hitler thought Spain was indebted to him because in Spanish civil war in Spain. Hitler had sent three hundred aircraft, experimental aircraft and pilots, to weed out the type of aircraft that would work the best. That was his proving grounds. That was before he invaded Poland. Russia and Italy did the same thing. Hitler went down there and wanted Spain to return the favor by invading and capturing Gibraltar. Spain refused. Spain was neutral during World War II supposedly. Kind of ironically, Spain felt a little bit bad that they didn't want to invade Gibraltar; so they offered Hitler a division or so of Spanish soldiers. Hitler was still pretty mad at Spain so he sent them up on the Russian front and they got chopped all to pieces. There are no real good friends here in the war I don't guess. Russia had a lot of good tanks but they had sent a lot of tanks down to the Spanish Civil War.

Was that the Tiger...

Mr. Chism: The Germans had the Tiger tanks. They sent these big T43's; these big huge things. They used Spain in 1938 or 1939 as a proving ground. You take the equipment we built down there and what doesn't work out, we want fool with it and what turns out to be good, we send it up to production. They also trained a lot of battles down there. So they had the jump on to us. We didn't have a proving ground. Ironically the United States had a big volunteer force. The United States had volunteered to help the Spanish and most of them got killed. But they went over there on their own.

After you took a train through Africa where did you go from there? You departed from where?

Mr. Chism: We stayed several days around Algiers; out in the desert around Algiers. We were under a pretty separate code. We were fed British rations and drank British tea. As a matter of fact we got paid a little bit. We got paid in British pounds. By the time I learned how much a pound and a share and all that was we would move somewhere else. Then we got orders to go into Italy. We didn't know where we were going but we had orders. We made a pretty good sized convoy and we still had folks still in the Mediterranean that hadn't gotten out and didn't want out because they were trying to block all the ships that they could between Africa and Italy. Of course they stayed in there and helped the Africa Corp. get out as much equipment as they could and get across the Mediterranean and get it into Italy. A lot of it they did get out. They were still down there blockading the coal and stuff. Malta was a big British Island down there in the Mediterranean and it had been pounded like everything.

Now at this time you were not part of the 34th Infantry? Right now you were just a replacement infantry.

Mr. Chism: I was called a casual. I went as my own self; I was not part of any unit. There was a loose knit unit of order number or group number of maybe 250 men and one officer. His only job was just to keep you from straggling and straying off.

So at this time you are just a man who is there to take the orders and wherever they send you, they send you and they could have sent you to any division at this time right?

Mr. Chism: Oh yes. I got into Italy and went into Naples. We went on a convoy to cross the Mediterranean made up of I guess thirty-fifty ships. It was a lot. This boat that I was on. They called them ships; you are not supposed to call them boats. This ship belonged to _____ which was a London based company. The name of it was The Vallingdam. It had been a vacation luxury liner sort of a thing. It was based out of Vallingdam, Holland, which was way up on the seaport of the North Sea. They had a Dutch crew on board. It had an English Captain and English ground crew. What happened when Holland fell, this liner had been to Brazil. It was in Brazil. It couldn't go home. If it went home it was captured, whatever. So they didn't go home. They took it to Liverpool anyway and surrendered the ship there. Britain needs everything it can get so they put a captain, an English gun crew and put it into a troop transport service. It had some beautiful state rooms in it. They ripped all the furniture out. The English do everything different. They had hammocks for the troops to sleep in with hooks on both sides. I never could get in one. I don't think I could have ever slept in one if I got in one. We would take a blanket from the hammock and go up on deck and sleep on it. It didn't rain at all. We slept up on deck. Every morning was boat drill and they would appoint somebody and tell them, "You stay down here and don't go to the boat drill, go to your life boat section just to kind of watch the equipment down here." One morning this Lieutenant in charge told me to stay and I knew what to do. That morning the English captain was going to check the quarters to make sure everybody fell out for boat drill. Well there was another guy there from Indiana, a big old rough country boy from Indiana. He said, "Well I am not going up there." He just turned over and laying back about half asleep. Well that morning the captain, the English captain, made his rounds and inspected to make sure everybody fell out for boat drill. Well I had an excuse to be down there. He didn't say a word to

me. He just asked if I was in charge of quarters that morning and I said yes. Then he turned around to this other old boy and kind of punched him with his foot and he said, "Hey soldier why didn't you fall out and go to your battle station or go to your lifeboat station?" Old boy said he didn't want to. We had been taught to be real courteous. The English captain said, "You mean you didn't want to go?" He said, "No I didn't want to go." He said, "Well what if the boat would have sunk?" This old boy said, "Well Captain, that is your problem, it's your boat, it is not mine." The guy just turned around and walked off. But anyway we went in there the first night and we pulled off of those boats

Where did you land in Italy?

Mr. Chism: Just between _____ and Naples; just some small docks in there. These weren't big boats. They were fairly small boats.

What year was that that you landed?

Mr. Chism: Yes that was the first of 1944. I get 1944 and 1943 mixed up. We moved on up into Italy and just lay down in the woods and slept there. The first air raid I ever saw, but they weren't shooting at us at all. They were going down and bombing the docks. The planes would come down and spray the bottom of the docks. It was not often they hit anything. The air was filled with anti-aircraft fire and tracers. We moved out of there and into a little town called Minavinto and I joined the 34th National Guard division.

So right there in that town of Minavinto that is where you joined the 34th? That is the 34th Infantry Division of the 168th Regiment right?

Mr. Chism: The 168th Regiment.

That is the Iowa National Guard?

Mr. Chism: That is the Iowa National Guard. I had never heard about that before.

This is the patch and what was there...

Mr. Chism: Well the division at one time right after the War of Mexico; was that 1914 or 1913? This division was down there and they adopted this patch. This black part is what they call a ___ which is a Mexican word for water jug. The New Mexico and the desert scenes, the cow skull; anytime you see New Mexico and the desert _____. That is where that patch came from. This division had been chopped all to pieces. They were perhaps half strength or less.

Half-strength?

Mr. Chism: I'm guessing, but in this one battalion there were 116 of us and that went in at night. We left there and went pretty quick to the _____.

So you took part in the landing on the beaches of _____?

Mr. Chism: The division itself, I guess they got corny that night. I guess they were off the line which made it much better. Now quite often the replacement went on with a company that was on line in combat. He didn't know anybody up there at all and the company commander or the platoon leader would take them down and say, "This is the squad you are in; this is the squad leader and get ready because we are getting ready to make an attack in twenty minutes somewhere." A lot of them were killed; there were a lot of replacements killed and you never knew their name. A lot of them were killed before they were ever moved out with the company. Here they were put elbow to elbow and they did not know the men or who they trained with. It was a poor set up really.

What was the life expectancy of a replacement?

Mr. Chism: It depended on the job you got. Let me give you what happened to me. The company commander brought a bunch of us into this tent and had a gas light pumped up and you could see pretty well. He was very cordial. He tricked me really. He said, "What do the term push, pull, tap, aim and fire mean?" I said, "Well that is the field expedience to un-jam an automatic rifle." He said, "You are just exactly right, you are the man I want." He said, "I want you to have an automatic rifle." Every once in awhile those things would jam. You would feel those things hit the magazine and you would pull the trigger and nothing. If I would have said, "I never heard of that" I might have been let off. But I didn't. So I got the ground automatic. The ground automatic was an old weapon. It was effect in World War I. It was a good weapon and it was a heavy weapon. It weighed 21 pounds and that was a load to carry over the mountain. We carried ten magazines of ammunition around the waist and they weighed about a pound apiece. They had just set up an automatic rifle team. They took another guy and he was to wear a big ammo belt and he carried twelve magazines of ammunition. The reason that was such a hazardous job and my history shows somewhere that the average life of the automatic rifle throughout the Italian campaign was six weeks in the attack and eight weeks in the stalemate or setting positions. The reason for that is every time you drew any fire from the enemy, the platoon leader or company commander would say to get the automatic weapons up. If you had a good place to hide and felt secure about that time they would say for you to get out of there and bring it up and fire at the enemy. Of course the enemy, the first thing they wanted to do is just like we wanted to do. We wanted to knock the automatic weapons out first. They would concentrate on knocking the automatic weapons out first. Every patrol that went out at night and there were patrols that went out every night carried at least one automatic rifle. One of the reasons that they made a two man team out of it was because at least you would not carry it out every other night. This other guy that was with you, he would take it out one night and you would alternate. That made it a whole lot better. But we didn't ever get out of our artillery range. We moved in about six miles maybe on a front of about ten miles wide. From the hills behind us, they could see every move you made. They shelled the front line troops; they shelled the ____, the ration box, the hospital and the cemeteries. Nobody that we knew was shelled. About the only place that any of the nurses in the hospital that were killed by enemy action were from some shells that actually fell inside the hospital and killed one of them. I think maybe one or two were killed in Okinawa. I've got several articles on this guy here, a friend of mine. I got an article down here from a man that when I took basic training with was a staff writer from the Nashville Tennessean. My daddy sent it to me. He got it out of the paper and sent to me in Italy. He had no idea I knew the man.

As a matter of fact he didn't really send me that article. What he sent me was on the back of that article. But when I turned it over, I saw the guy that I knew.

It says here that the code name for the Angio Beachhead was Operation Shingle. They always give those names.

Mr. Chism: One of the big problems there on the beach head was getting supplies in and being able to move them. We had to move supplies at night and even unload the ships at night because we were under observation. They had this great big thing right here, the Leopold, which they would back out of the railroad dump and fire it. It would fire a shell. I saw the guns. You could crawl down in it. You could fire a shell about the same size as a Volkswagen. They called it the AngioExpress and it sound just like a freight train when it went over. They did not use that for the most part on front line troops. That was to shell the ships out on the harbor and the big ammo dumps of gasoline and so forth. This guy right here that wrote that article there, I met him in Italy and he was born and raised not far from here. He was in a gasoline supply outfit. He had a good job and a good place to sleep at night. He told me that what they would do would dig some trenches out in the field out from their gasoline dump and when they shelled that gasoline dump they would take some gas cans out there and pour out two or three barrels of gas and set it on fire and to burn. The Nazi gunner would figure they had hit it and cut out their shelling. They did that night after night, burning gasoline up there. We stayed on the beach head until May 23rd. We pushed off. There were a lot of mine fields there on the Angio. Right on the beach head there was a head of pontoon marshes in Italy which is a marshy country. In order to get some of the good graces of some of the people there we spend a lot of money to drain those marshes. They used them for farmland. They dug a ditch to the canal to drain it. There would be a flat spot of about six to eight feet and there would be a big embankment of about six feet. That was ideal to get behind because you could hold that position. We put in machine equipment on top of that thing. We tried to move out for four months. We put machine guns on that. This was during winter time. There was a lot of mud there and the tanks couldn't operate very well. There was overcast a lot of the time and the planes couldn't fly. All we could do was wait.

So the weather was also your enemy?

Mr. Chism: The weather was against us many times. When we finally did push off in May the ground had dried up some and used tanks very extensively. We made a surprise on the morning of May 23rd. We had made many diversionary attacks two weeks before that time. But anyway behind this _____ canal big embankment, we would keep every other man on that bank all night. One man could get a little sleep. We dug into the ground into that bank and one man got a little bit of sleep. They set out one night; they sent two experimental type weapons against us. It was a remote controlled tank about three feet high and loaded with explosives. If you had run it into something it would have wreaked havoc. It was just a miniature tank. The first one that came through, our machine gunners got on him and loaded it down; I guess about four or five machine guns and I guess an automatic rifle. It blew a lot of parts over onto us which ordinance had us to pick up and send back. They wanted to look at them and so forth. They sent one more out and for some reason that tank quit. It just quit running. We ran out there and got it and brought the thing intact back to the lines. The last I heard of it, it was in Aberdeen, Maryland. I thought that if I ever got up there I want to see it again. But they never used it again.

It failed on them.

Mr. Chism: Apparently it wasn't real trustworthy.

Did you help in retrieving it?

Mr. Chism: I went out there as an ambush guard. No matter what you did the men out there. I did a lot of that. Every night on an ambush you send out patrols. You send out three or four different kinds. You send out about a three man patrol just as reconnaissance. You work your way down that hill just to see what is going on. The next type of patrol would be an ambush patrol to move out so many hundreds of yards and kind of spread out so you can ambush any patrol that they were sending into you. Quite often there were some fire fights there. Then there is a combat patrol that would send out about ten or twelve people. You had a machine gun down there that was giving some problems. You would send about twelve to fifteen men down there to knock that rascal out. There were about three kinds of patrols. Now before the push off, all that was lined in front of our lines. We didn't push off from that position; we pushed off from another position which was totally flat. About seven or eight miles behind us in the German lines was a mountain. You did not stick your head up after daylight hardly. We had a platoon leader that was Jewish. He was a good person and I was afraid of him like everything. The reason I was afraid of him was he would walk upright in the daytime and he got shot at several times. He finally got hit and got hurt pretty bad. His name was Goldstein. I said, "Lt. Goldstein you better get your head down before it gets shot off." He said, "I will not bow my head to a Nazi dog ever!" He had had some people that had been persecuted pretty heavily in the early part of the war. I can understand it.

In some of the concentration camps?

Mr. Chism: Well at that time we don't a thing about a concentration camp.

You didn't know it.

Mr. Chism: We knew that the Jews had had their phones confiscated and we knew that their businesses had been looted and that the Jewish people in Prague and Warsaw and so forth were being herded off into one spot. They were made to walk down the middle of the street with the Star of David armband. They couldn't own anything. They were being sorely persecuted. We had no idea that they were being burned and killed or whatever. On this left position I was there when we pushed off and now this highway 7 ran from Rome down through there was in front of us several hundred yards, there was a little cinema off to our left up there and there was three houses and we made outposts out of those houses. Each night after dark each house had about five or six men in it and we would alternate out after dark. The furthest one down was code named Ace. Ace, King and Queen were the code names. Ace was the furthest one down. I have been down there one night with my brand new automatic. The next night there was a young man that was an ammo carrier and so forth in auxiliary. He carried the automatic the next night. He was a fine young version that I didn't really get to know very well. His daddy was a Presbyterian preacher in Iowa. That night they moved in there and took that outpost; they captured all of them

there. They captured him and another young boy from New York. He was the sweetest and we used to pick at him. I hated that I did it. We said, "You better watch out, you know what the Germans do to cute boys. It would be rough on you." Sure enough he was captured. And that made me feel bad. I was called several months after that to identify his body. He still had on a big, long brown mustard scarf that his mom had given him. He still had that on laying there dead. When we moved off the beach head there on the final push there were a lot of anti-tank mines spread out.

So you had to do some mine sweeping?

Mr. Chism: Yeah we had to get the mines. We didn't do any sweeping because they were lying on top of the ground. We knew where they were. According to the Geneva Convention during the war if you laid out a mine field it had to be laid out in a specific pattern. It wasn't always done but it was supposed to be. It had to be catalogued and marked. You had to have a sign there, "Mines!" I guess we did, I don't remember seeing one there. The engineers came up and we furnished and I carried several ambush patrols out and go out in front of the engineers and we just lay there in front of the grass and they picked those mines up. What they did is they cleared cards through there. They just picked them up and stacked them up in a pile. They marked those cards with white engineer's tape that you could see at night. When the push came the tanks could roll right on through it. There was a lot of barbed wire up there but the tanks could roll right on through the barbed wire. You get to seeing things and your nerves plays tricks on you especially if you stayed up all night and looked out in the dark and the barbed wire reminds me of this. In the barbed wire we had hung; when we went out on patrol we knew our way through the barbed wire. We could cut around the barbed wire with no problem. You didn't know it until you were hurt. We had hung ration cans on the wire and put some rocks in the ration cans. Just about anywhere you touch that wire those cans would just rattle and make an awful racket. I stood there one morning probably about 2 o'clock and I was in a hole just about waist high and I heard the awful lest racket in that barbed wire. It was real dark. Then I heard something running and it looked just exactly in mind when it came running right at me and he was all bent over and he had a bayonet. I took that combat rifle and stuck it dead in the creature. It was a young calf about so high and it had gotten through the wire.

It kind of relieved you.

Mr. Chism: Yeah and that was a good thing because we got a hold of the kitchen crew and they could get the jeep up pretty close and get the calf on that jeep. They ground that calf up and made hamburgers. We got to have hamburgers the next night on the line. We killed several like that. That was strictly on purpose because I didn't know what that thing was. You are always so tired and you're worn out. You saw the terrain out in Southern Italy. After we moved off of beach head I got hurt up on what is called the ____ Plains.

Is that where you went from Angio and then you went on to...where did you go from there?

Mr. Chism: Actually I went from there to the hospital. We moved out and took Highway 7. It was a straight shot into town. It wasn't quite that easy. That was the 26th that I got hurt. We had patrols on the 4th of June and _____ entered on the 9th and then early morning on the 6th. I think

history has it on the 6th of June. We had several good hard battles between Angio and Rome. They were defending Rome real heavy. When they found out that they couldn't hold it, they evacuated Rome, carried everything that they could and moved back to the next line of defense. That was getting summer time and the ground was hard and the tanks and trucks could roll and you would maneuver it. We didn't need the news anymore. They got to rest also. We moved quite a bit of distance. We moved on up by late September I guess. Let me back up a little bit. We hit what is called the Gothic Line. That was another line of defense that they built right there in the mountains. They saw our propaganda leaflets and gave us a picture of the Gothic Line that was 60 miles deep. I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of troops they had in there and how many guns. Some of it was true and some of it wasn't. I wished I have one of those leaflets but I didn't get one of them. I wasn't in the hospital long. I went back on the line pretty quickly. They didn't keep you long.

When you got injured was it at the end of Angio? What did your injuries consist of?

Mr. Chism: The initial push off of Angio was on May 23rd, 1944. I got hit on the 26th of May which was three days. We moved across Highway 7 and we were moving. There was a railroad line that was going through there and they wanted that cut. We cut that about a couple days later. We turned north in Italy and headed up toward Rome. We were attacked down a wheat field. We didn't have any water and it was hot. It was as hot there in May as it is here. I was after water. The whole company was after water. We worked our way down in a wheat field and there was a creek down there. You could tell it was a creek; it had brush on both sides of it. I was working my way and a number of us were down there and we hit the creek. I got in the creek and I drank all I could hold and filled my canteen up. Right above me I could hear some firing and in just about a minute here came an old boy running down through that creek and he was just hitting the ground it seemed like every four or five feet. It was a boy from Tennessee that I went overseas with. He had come to that creek and just jumped over that brush and he was a big old country boy. He said, "You know I jumped right in the midst of them." He did he jumped right in the middle of two or three soldiers there and startled them. He said, "I hit the ground running." He had ran down the creek to us. He got hit one time. They hit him on the side of the hand and just ripped that hand open. I'm sure he is crippled in the hand. They followed him down the creek a little bit and were firing down the creek bed. I think this was another ambush, another set up. The way they did that was there was just a little depression there on the creek bank. They got up in there and out of his fire. They dropped a couple of little 50 millimeter mortar shells in there. I got down in there and got on my knees and I was getting out of the way of small arms fire. I was looking right at this guy named Holt. I don't remember much about him. He was two or three years older than I was. I was down on my knees and I guess he was too. I wasn't too far from him. Those mortars hit and I just saw one whole side of his face disappear. We carried him out but he died. I lost my automatic there I guess. I never saw it again. It was all torn up. I got a lot of little pieces. You got a 50 millimeter mortar shell with a small shell that they break all to pieces. But I had one pretty good size piece in there (points to right forearm). It went in there and cut that artery. I had two or three pieces right in here (points to top of left arm). That bled so bad it ruined my watch. I never did get that watch fixed. I also got a piece under this eye (left eye) and it is still in there. My eyes were black and bloody and when I raised this hand up (right hand) blood was just streaming down. I undid the cuff of my shirt, pulled it back and my arm was cut

open and I could see the end of that artery sticking up like that and every time my heart beat it jumped up. I knew I had about five minutes left to do something.

You knew you had been hit then.

Mr. Chism: I knew I had been hit. Honestly it didn't hurt a bit. There was no pain what-so-ever. I was scared to death I think of shock. But as far as being hurt in pain, I wasn't.

Did your training come in handy on what to do?

Mr. Chism: Yeah I guess it did. Of course the thing about it is we carried a first aid kit which was nothing but a big bandage and about three feet of gauze. That was great. It was highly compressed. In that first aid kit was a package of sulfur powder and twelve sulfur pills. I was trying to get my belt off. I had this big old grand automatic cartridge belt on and had my regular pants under it. My left hand was trying to cramp up because all the muscle was right up under the skin. I was going to get that belt off and put it on my arm to cut the blood off. I've been taught that that is what they do. There were no medics handy. Where the medics were, I don't know. But they did a good job. We will talk about them in a few minutes. There was an old boy that came up through there that I had known and hadn't been with the company too long. He came in even after I did. He crawled up in the weeds there and he saw that I was hit. He got my first aid kit and he took that big bandage out and wrapped it around there just as tight as he could to stop it from bleeding. These other places weren't bleeding too badly. I lost a lot of blood. My canteen was full of water. I had just gotten it out of the creek. He took those twelve sulfur pills and he said I had to take them. I said, "You don't take all twelve at once. He said, "Yes you do to that is what you said." I took every one of them. But I guess I walked fifteen miles. There was another friend of mine by the name of mine, a man by the name of Alfred Stewart from New York. He lost about 75% of his eyesight. I know one eye was totally removed. The other one was bleeding so badly. He had a hold of my arm and we walked for miles and miles until we got to an aid station.

You said about how many miles you walked?

Mr. Chism: I guess about fifteen. The aid stations had moved up. The aid stations kept up pretty good. Now what they did, the medics, was each company had about two or three medics. They were noncombatant; they did not carry a gun. They carried a little satchel of gauze, sulfur tablets, sulfur powder, maybe sometimes carried a little bit of morphine, cough syrup, and aspirin; little things like that. They had just basic first aid. They were not medical personnel as such. The divisions had a medical department. We had what we called the 34th division 109th medics. They were not members of our company as such; they were assigned to our company by the commander of the medical detachment which in this case was Captain Schuster. He was Jewish. He was a good doctor I understand from Minnesota in the National Guard. He was a character. Everybody liked him fine. Every once in awhile when he wasn't busy being a doctor he would take off his arm band and get him a gun and go up on the line and fire at them. He hated the Nazi's of course worse than I do. He had every reason to. Captain Schuster was quite a character. He commanded that. Nearly every patrol we went out on, we took a medic. According to the Geneva Convention our medics were not to be fired on. Nor were we to fire on their medics. If

you captured some men and there was a medic in it, he was to be given a choice of going with us or going back to where he belonged. No questions asked. Sometimes they did but most of the time a German medic would prefer a prison war camp rather than go back. When he got back to a prison war camp he had it made. Quite often you would have a man that would be hurt and be hurt bad. You would put up a white flag and they would keep going by the white flag. They wouldn't honor it. A time or two our medics were fired on in their sector and we fired on their men to. It's kind of an eye for an eye I guess. But not too often. But the medics did a good job. Now you have got your aid station and if you could walk you would walk through the part of the back where they got the ambulance at and they carried you to what they called an evacuation hospital.

So that is where you went was to an evacuation hospital?

Mr. Chism: I went to an evacuation hospital. A funny thing happened, I got to the first aid station and they insisted that I take twelve more of those sulfur tablets. They didn't have any water and I didn't have any water left either. But they were in an old Italian house that had plenty of wine. So I got about a half canteen cup full of wine and I never was a wine drinker and still not. But I took those pills with that wine and had a shot of morphine. By the time I got back to that second aid station I didn't feel any pain at all. I was feeling pretty good. I had lost a lot of blood and had got to where I couldn't walk very well. They carried me back to the evacuation hospital and it was night then. I woke up and I was there barefooted. They took my shoes away from me and carried them back to the line. They took the billfold that I got as a graduation present before I went into the Army and I carried all the way through and brought it back. I carried it in my shirt pocket. The reason I did that was because we had a ration that if it wasn't plastic or vinyl or vinyl type stuff, it kept some of the rations from getting wet. That was ideal to put your billfold in that thing and put it in your pocket. It stayed pretty dry. There was somebody that was getting my billfold out of my pocket and I remember just drawing back and swinging. I didn't know who it was or what it was. I didn't care. It was the chaplain. The Protestant chaplain was a Cumberland Presbyterian country preacher from West Virginia. He said, "No wait a minute you are going to have some surgery. Let me keep this for a minute or two." I said, "Well okay." I had surgery the next morning right at the tent pitched out in the field. The next morning I was air evacuated off of beach head on a C-47 back to Naples.

So you went all the way back to Naples?

Mr. Chism: Well that was the nearest hospital. There was no place level enough I don't guess; down below that they couldn't put a hospital. The reason I went back to Naples was because there was a good area there to put a hospital at. They had built an area there to house a 1939 World's Fair. It was a beautiful landscape place with buildings everywhere and that is what they used for the hospital compound. The doctors would use the tank part and it had strictly bombs hid in it.

I have seen those on one of the videos.

Mr. Chism: There is a building out there for each participating nation. The American building for the American exhibits had been hit by a bomb. It has some temporary roofing on it to make a

storage unit out of it. It depicted life on the frontier and there was an artificial log cabin built out of stucco and mason and so forth. In the center of the whole thing was the Italian exhibit place. There was beautiful tile and wall and had two big glass figures in there of modern Italian soldiers that had a hoe and a rake and underneath it in two or three languages was a big brass plaque including English; I believe it was from Leviticus where it says, "They should beat their swords in the ____ instead of war." In the center of that was the chaplain's office. I switched offices there and it opened up to a pretty good sized room. It was a lot of the radio equipment in there. We would go down to his office every night at 6 o'clock and listen to the news. There was some very early television equipment in there which they had succeeded in sending a telepicture and images of the war and stuff like that. We used to go there every night about 6 o'clock just to hear the news.

Did you ever go down there and hear FDR? Did you ever hear anything?

Mr. Chism: I don't ever recall hearing him after I went there. I remember hearing him as a kid. Every night after the news at 6 o'clock, PBC would broadcast through the underground, messages in code. Of course we had no idea what they were but now they say, "Now to our friends in France, the moon is right tonight." There were about fifteen sentences like that and there was a direct message in between the telegrams. To the underground in Italy they would broadcast the same thing; not the same message. There was quite a bit of underground activity of course probably with France than with any other nation and maybe Poland. But in Italy there was a whole lot. The partisan people would up rise when we made the final push we shot our leaflets out and that was in probably April of 1945. We shot our leaflets everywhere that had the 5th Army pass on it. This was written in several different languages, "The bearer of this pass shall be granted guaranteed safe conduct to a neutral territory or to a safe place." They will be fed, clothed, housed and so forth according to the Geneva Convention. All they had to do was take it up to an American soldier and he was bound by it. We picked up quite a few Germans and civilians like that. The civilians just used that as a pass to say don't shoot at me. We went into one little town where there had been a lot of partisan activity and of course the Germans hated the partisan troops. The underground hated them much more than we did because they had torn their towns all to pieces. A lot of the light poles there or telephone poles are made out of metal. We went in this town and there was a man hanging with his hands and feet tied. There was a big meat hook that they hang the beef at the slaughter house under his jaw and they had hung him up there. He had been hanging there for two or three days. He was one of the head of the underground activity in that town. He was left there as a sign there by the airfield, "Watch out!" I'm sure it was very effective. These little towns the Germans would come in and most of the time if the mayor was not in their pockets or whatever. They would get rid of him. They would pick up sometimes the sorriest person there was and make him mayor. They would say, "We are going to tell you what to do, but you are mayor of the town." As soon as we go through there, you find these underground people, the partisans. You would hear some shooting and look out on the street and there would lay the German selected mayor, the German chief of police and maybe his secretary and the secretary's brother-in-law. But many of them they didn't like so they drove them out. Of course the allied military government came in there and they put in another mayor and everything was alright.

How long were you in the hospital there in Naples?

Mr. Chism: Three weeks.

You were there three weeks. After those three weeks they came and grabbed you; your division had already been in Rome and had already fought through Rome so where did you go after that?

Mr. Chism: They had what they called a replacement depot where your replacements go through. They send what they call a RTU of returned units there. It's up to them to provide transportation back up to your unit. Any means that they could get their hands on. When I came out of the hospital the company was up past Rome and I was in Naples. There was a Greek freight ship about two miles down at the harbor down by the hospital compound that was heading north. It was a coastal trailer. It was another one of these that had a Greek crew on it. It was at sea when the Nazi's overran Greece and they couldn't go anywhere. They had sailed into Indonesia or North Africa someplace come to find out. This was summertime and they loaded just about everybody they could get just on the deck. This was a four or five day trip up there. This thing just barely moved. My lord you could walk as fast as that thing. It was an old rust bucket.

About how many men do you think were on deck?

Mr. Chism: I guess about 150 people. The ship wasn't all that big. They had us a bunch of c-rations on there. There were men on there that I knew that had gotten a field commission at Angio. He was an Italian man by the name of DeAugustine. DeAugustine was quite a character. He was a 2nd Lieutenant and sitting right in next to us there at the docks was a ship flying a Liberian flag. On deck was crates; these old hand-made African crates made out of ___ and bark. The only person I knew on that ship was Lt. DeAugustine. I said, "DeAugustine look at that ship over there." He said, "Yes." I said, "I reckon what's in them crates; probably oranges or something like that." He said, "Let's go get one?" I said, "How are we going to do that?" He said, "If you do what I say, and we are going to get one of those crates. I said, "Alright." We walked right by the gang plank and walked right by the Liberian ships. We walk about halfway back and met a guy from Liberia I guess. He was so dark skinned. Apparently ___ said something in Arabic. He didn't understand Arabic. DeAugustine made signals with his hands and pointed to the crate and said he wanted two or three of them. Finally DeAugustine said, "Go down there and get one of them things like I tell you." I walked down there and got one of them crates, marched right off that and back onto the ship. I opened the crate and it was filled with onions. It was the first red-skinned onions I have ever seen. You can buy them here anywhere. These were red-skinned. We ate quite a few of them because we had the rations and you could cut them up and they were pretty good. I had an extra pair of pants that I gave to one of the firemen; one of the stokers on that ship. I gave him two or three cans of cigarettes I gave him a pair of extra pants. I was going to throw them away anyway. His clothes were as raggedy as could be. He spoke good English. He said, "You come down here to this door." I said, "Alright." He brought me canteen cup full of coffee. It was strong. It was rough; this glue coffee or whatever it was. But I drank it. It was the first coffee I had had. It wasn't any good. The next day he gave me a big cantaloupe.

Where did that ship end up finally? When did you get off?

Mr. Chism: I got off at a little old town; a little old seaport town. There were vehicles there waiting for trucks. I guess two trucks. There about fifteen or twenty of us going back to the where we were supposed to be. They carried us to the division headquarters and put us out and then they took off. It was up to the kitchen chief and the supply room chief. They just called up to the 168th Infantry Company. I believe I was the only one really there at headquarters and they sent somebody down. I got back and the company was off the line and they were in an olive orchid. It was still pretty warm. We moved out pretty quick after that and crossed over the ___ River and got into ___ Valley. Once we got into ___ Valley and got the tanks to moving again it was pretty good going. We got into Florence and the ___ River wasn't very big because that connects the bridges into Florence. This was a bridge built in the 14th Century. It was a non-vehicle bridge. You couldn't drive a truck across it. But we crossed the ___ River and there wasn't any problem. It was just slow moving. It wasn't very deep. The Nazi's defended the southern end of Florence. Remember the boy named James Baker from Pulaski that got us thrown out of the Chinese restaurant in Washington, D.C? Somewhere along the line James got into some more booze somewhere. We got up to ___ River and were getting some small arms fire from civilians there. We were on top up on the roof. He was up there doing fine but he got too much whiskey in, too much alcohol. He said, "I can throw a hand grenade that far." He got ___ and was running across the building and swung it. He couldn't throw it that far. About the third or fifth he drew back to throw gain and a sniper shot him right in the eye. It killed him in a matter of minutes. James died drunk, I guess he was happy. James was a whole lot older than I was. I liked him he was kind of a good guy.

That was in Florence?

Mr. Chism: That was in Florence. There was very little opposition. Then they moved on the other side of Florence. Florence has been a ___ city. I have been there two or three times for six months and you will never see ___. After Florence bad weather set in again and it was southern Italy all over again with one other thing. It got extremely cold. It was high in the mountains. It was extremely cold; snow and ice and sometimes blizzards. It wasn't all that bad down on the lower end but up in the mountain the wind was bad. Ice would run for days. It moved straight up Highway 65 there. It ran from Florence into Balogne. Once you get into Balogne it was spring of the next year. We spent the night right there. We got the news out again. We used them as our basic method of transportation.

So you got into Balogne probably about April of 1945?

Mr. Chism: It was about February of 1945. We had a roadblock set up on Highway 65 right on straight rocky ridge. We were up there on Christmas Eve of 1944. We had dug some dugouts there and we were going to try to keep any armor from coming up 65 and coming through those mountains. I don't know if they would have gotten through there easily because there was so much ice on the ground. We had our equipment up there. The Battle of the Bulge started in Belgium about the 17th or 18th of December. We didn't know anything about it. We knew there was something going on there but we didn't have any idea what the extent of it was. The Germans were good at pulling diversionary attacks. We did to. We learned a lot about tactics from the Germans. I guess they learned from us. We were told to expect an attack up that

Highway. We were issued thermite grenades. A thermite grenade burns brighter than _____. You put that on your equipment and it destroys it. We didn't have anything left to destroy but a few machine guns and some mortars.

You definitely didn't want it getting in their hands.

Mr. Chism: We were sitting up on that on Christmas Eve. We had a place that was just big enough for you to get in there with rock on top and dirt. It was a pretty safe place. Each one of these places was connected together by a sound powered telephone. A sound powered telephone was one that was just like a handset; a standard handset; with two wires and it ran to another handset and another handset. It had no batteries what-so-ever. As long as your wires were intact it would work. It didn't have a ringer so you had to keep it on your ear at all times or close by. But that is all the communication, if we had any communication, at all. The company commander had at his disposal a ringer type phone that he could ring back to the battalion or regiment headquarters. He also had a big 300 set radio that a radioman carried on his back. With that he could contact another 536 radio. They weren't real good in the mountains. They didn't work very well. As a matter of fact on one or two occasions we had carrier pigeons. We used them one time that I know of. The pigeon company would have been a good job. All you did was clean cages and fed pigeons all during the wartime. That would have been great.

All pigeons were cleaner than you were.

Mr. Chism: You better believe they were. There was a man in there that had escaped out of Holland and got to New York just in time. He was a great big Dutchman named VonDillon. We didn't have a lot of close friends. We didn't make close friends. Another guy was called Clark from Indiana. It was kind of quiet and we knew to expect something. Our conversation was going to be like this. This was going to be our third; this was our second military Christmas. We were speculating on the third. We all figured at least one more. That wasn't a good day. We weren't very happy for Christmas. It almost came true. I got home ten days before my third Christmas. All of a sudden over that thought was "Silent Night" just as plain as it could be. We got together and listened to that thing. That did happen occasionally. That was kind of strange in such a God forsaken place to hear that. About 3 o'clock in the morning they said to get rid of everything because we were moving back 16 miles. Every man for himself. We moved back 16 miles to the next ridge because they decided we couldn't hold that. But the big push never did come there. We moved back 16 miles and dug in some better fortification and another division of men had come up and stopped all that bridge. We had plenty of men there and we could have held but they didn't. But it was just one of those things that never did happen.

Did you keep the automatic the whole time?

Mr. Chism: No I didn't. Of course I wasn't sad to see it go. This guy from Nashville told me one time, he said, "I would like to have one of these automatics to take home with me." I said, "What in the world do you want one of these things for?" He said, "Right behind my house I have an old rod fence. I want to put that thing back out there and you know what I want to do on it every morning?" You get the idea. He is going out there every morning with it. I kind of felt like that to. As time went on and more casualties came about I got to where I was beginning to get senior

man. I don't know why I have lived longer than most. Then we got the officers and the noncommissioned officers, they recognize that and they would then put them off into better places. So they called me up one day and offered me a squad leader position, a staff sergeant, and I would not take it. I didn't want it.

So this was kind of like an option then? They never made you. It was what would you like to do?

Mr. Chism: This guy that was company commander and we changed company commanders pretty regular for various reasons. I never met one that I didn't like or didn't respect. I could pick at him. I told him that I didn't want the responsibility. I do well up there by myself. I didn't want any dealings with sending somebody else _____. He kind of told me about some of the responsibility. That was just fine, that didn't bother me. I told him that I appreciated it and all that but I just wanted to leave well enough alone. He said, "I am not going to do that, would you like to lead a mortar squad?" I said, "Yeah!" There was no hesitation in that. The mortars were set up two or three yards behind behind the line. But they fired over your head.

Basically you had to worry about your air bomb...

Mr. Chism: Artillery was the only thing just about that was going to get you because your mortar men did not have any night patrols and couldn't take a mortar and set it up in the night. It was a big deal. We lost a lot of mortar men. But it wasn't near as bad as we did the automatic rifles. That tickled me to death. I was thrilled at that.

This was after you had come back right?

Mr. Chism: It was after we came and this was right before we got up on Highway 65 before we pulled back because I carried a mortar.

Okay, so the night that you pulled back is the night that you switched over, well right around that time.

Mr. Chism: Of course I had no idea how much longer the war was going to last and for the most part it didn't last a lot longer. The last bad piece of combat that I saw was when we went down a big ravine. This was north of Highway 65. It was almost in the edge or below the city. It was a great big city; a modern city. We were carried on trucks up to a place. It was a demoralizing thing. There was about 15 or 20 dead _____ laying out there in the yard. But we marched all night long down a huge ravine and then up on a plateau. This was at night and I didn't know it then but the company commander told us after the war was over that he had been told to expect a hundred and something casualties. We didn't lose a man. We came back the next day back the same way in the daytime and we found where we stepped on all kind of mines that didn't detonate. They had been in the ground to long. A strange thing happened down there. I was in a mortar squad and I went down, I was on the back end. I didn't lose that position down there at all. When daylight broke we were sitting up against the bank looking across the ravine but there lay a German soldier. He had gotten through a fence and was down like that. I put my gun on him and poked him. The guy had slipped up there at night and gone to sleep. I didn't want to shoot that man half asleep. I thought that would have been real unchristian like. But the more I

watched him I wasn't sure. I told this guy, I said, "Pick up something off of the ground and throw it at him and if he moves we are going to shoot him." He hit him two or three times on the helmet. The man was dead; I don't know what killed him. Maybe he had been there for several days because he was dead. One of our problems, not with our company officers at all for the most part. This guy was a company officer. They would send these guys through 90 days OCS training and most of them if they came to a company and found out that the men had been there that had survived eight, ten, or twelve months, they listened to you. They knew; they knew that you had some _____. Anyway you get one that would say they had been through the OCS and they knew what to do. We moved off of this place where we found this what I thought was a live soldier. There was a bank there and a rocky road. There was a sniper sitting up in there and you couldn't move. Here came this little lieutenant who had just come to the company a few days before and he wanted to know why we weren't going up there. We said, "Man there is a sniper up there." He said, "You mean you are letting one man hold you up?" One man can hold up three hundred if he had the right position. We said, "Yeah." We were, I wasn't in the group because I wasn't in that job anymore, worked our way around on the back side off the hill, come down and get that sniper and the rest of the company could get through. That is the way we were doing it. He said, "I'll tell you what I'm not afraid to go up there." He walked almost right up and he hit the ground. He got hit. We thought he was dead. We tried to crawl up there and get him but he came dragging back down the line of fire to keep us from getting hit. This bullet had gone into his helmet between his helmet and his helmet liner at an angle. It jammed that helmet down against his head and knocked him out. We drug him back and gave him a little water. We might have poured a little on him, I'm not sure. He was kind of humble then. We got to picking on him. I said, "There was one of them up there, why don't you go back up there and show him what the hell is wrong with it." But every once in awhile you would have somebody to come up to Corp. headquarters that you would have to run the show and they would get you in trouble and then they would leave. I had that happen two or three times and that was kind of irritating. We got one guy in and he was from Iowa. He was a _____. He wound up a congressman for the state of Ohio. He had been all American; a big fine football player. He was a good guy after he found out the score. He made it plain that what he said went. One guy was giving out rations and he said, "I don't care who you are or what you are, but if you don't eat what I give you just throw it away." After awhile he wound up dead. Everybody liked him. But when somebody would come up and tell you how to do your job when you had been doing it and you had survived for twelve, thirteen or fourteen months. I didn't put much credence on that. I got real ill at a 2Lt it was over at beach head. I was looking through some binoculars and I had my gun up there and in came this guy who I had never met before. He said, "What are you looking at?" I said, "I'm looking at them German soldiers over there unloading that trailer way down on the edge of town down below the outpost. He said, "You mean you can see them?" I said, "Sure I can see them." He said, "Well why aren't you shooting at them?" I said, "Why? There will be no way I can hit one from here. I would just send up a smoke screen and it wouldn't be two minutes until mortar shells started dropping in here." He said, "Well that isn't any way to run a war." I said, "Well that is the best way that I know to run it." He said, "Well we might as well go home if you are not going to shoot at them." I said, "Well if they don't do any no more harm to me than unload that trailer, I'm ready to go." He got real ill at me about me. I said, "I tell you what you do. If you want to shoot at them, then you shoot at them." He got _____. He couldn't shoot within 50 yards of them. He shot four or five times and sure enough in about a minute here come the mortar shells. He took off and was gone. I never saw him again. But I had to stay there.

You had to endure that.

Mr. Chism: That was so irritating. We made one big by the book attack before the last days and it was a town in northern Italy. We rode all night. It was a town that had a wall around it. We were told that there were some troops in there ready to pull out and make a run for the Brenner Pass. About the only way out of Italy was through the Brenner Pass. That was where all the troops were headed.

Do you remember what the name of the town was?

Mr. Chism: No really I don't.

It wasn't Milan was it?

Mr. Chism: It was not Milan. We rode all night and I don't know why they didn't know we were there or why they didn't have anything on. We got on both sides of the northern gate and about daylight they started through there with a big truck convoy. We had a guy standing right there and the first truck that came through that gate; he put a big bazooka shell right through the engine. We rolled right through that gate. We didn't lose a man. A bunch of drivers rolled out of their trucks and were shot in their tracks. They didn't even have time to cut the engines off. That convoy sat there and their engines were running. That was the last real rough attack that I saw. We moved up a big ravine and we were south of Modena. They moved up armor all night and some guy in a tank stopped and posed and he _____ and died. We got on the trucks after that the next day and we moved a couple hundred miles on trucks just as far as they would let us. We would be stopped occasionally. As a matter of fact we were stopped in Modena and an Italian fascist threw a hand grenade in the back of the truck and got it in. The last guy on the truck got his hip blown up a little bit. It was nothing serious but it set the truck on fire. But it didn't hurt him to bad. That was in Parma. That is the home of the Parmesan cheese. We captured a general and his whole staff in Parma. But what would happen some partisan soldier would come out and flag the truck. They would say, "We have a whole bunch of Germans over here but they want surrender to us because they don't like us." I know why it's because the partisans would whoop them right on the spot; bloody them up and kill them. They said, "They will surrender to you." We would take a half a dozen men over there. They would register. They didn't want to be left with those partisans. We had a little town there about the same time frame and they came marching through. They had about thirty or forty German prisoners. Two or three of them had bloody faces and skinned ears and nose bloodied.

When did you know that the Italian campaign was over and that you were going to go home?

Mr. Chism: We knew it was winding down because we were capturing them in groves. We saw a lot of equipment abandoned on the roads and they had just gotten out and scattered. I don't know what little town it was but we had been on the road all night and pulled into a little four or five town houses little country town houses. Of course we knew somebody had to stay out all night. There were two or three tanks that had beaten us in there. The tank commanders told our company commanders, "We have rested. Put all of them to bed and go on to bed." We went into

the house with straw and I slept like this until the next morning. That was May 3rd or 4th. I'm not sure. I guess everybody was about awake when the company commander came out there and hollered, "Come on, come on, everybody come out." He read the order that had come down from 5th Army headquarters that all armed hospitals in between the Germany and the Republic of Germany and the United States of America be seized on this day that we were not to fire on them anymore unless the fired on us. We were to disarm them according to the Geneva Convention and they would be treated _____. It was just one of those things. I felt right then that I had won the superbowl, the lotto and everything else.

You did a lot more than the superbowl.

Mr. Chism: It was a great day. We moved several times after that to the border between France and Italy. We moved up there. _____ and then moved over here to the Yugoslav border and right there we were told that we had been selected for the strategic reserve and we would be carried across Russia and down in _____ to attack the Japanese down through China.

So you were fixing to head to the Pacific?

Mr. Chism: Yeah. We were fixing to head through the Pacific through Russia. I saw that a division hadn't been over there very long and had already packed up and was on boats and came back to the United States. A friend of mine who has lived behind me for years was on that. He was in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, when the war in Japan ended so he never did go over there.

Right and you didn't either did you?

Mr. Chism: No.

It was over with...

Mr. Chism: The atomic bomb took care of that. At that time I was a Supply Sergeant and I never did get the rating. I spent several weeks up there with some help and we straightened up all the company ____ and kept them in crates to carry them on the rails down through Russia. I don't know exactly where it was going out of.

How long did you have to stay before you came home; before you got back to the states?

Mr. Chism: There was a big problem. We had about 5 million men scattered throughout Europe and everybody wanted to go home at once. They set up a point system. Supposedly the ones who had been there the longest went home first and that is the way it ought to be. I don't remember exactly how it worked but you got a point for every month you were spent in the military. You got another point for every combat month you had. You got five points for every battle star and every decoration. You got five points for each _____. I didn't have anything. I had the battle star and i had some decorations. I wound up with seventy-nine points. The first group went out with eighty-five. The ones that came out with all that was really the ones in non-combat situations. Everyone that had gone in the army in the early 1940's. Another group that came out on that was some of the last ones to be drafted that had four or five children at home. That didn't bother me at

all. The next group that went out was eighty and then they dropped it to seventy-five and I went out on that one. We were way up on the Yugoslav border and it was cold.

What month was that?

Mr. Chism: This was November of 1945. I can't complain. There were several places I had gone and saw a lot of things. I wrangled around and was able to get into Switzerland. Switzerland was a neutral nation. I was able to get into Switzerland by signing an Affidavit saying that I will adhere to their laws. If I was caught for any crime whatsoever; I could not come back on the American continent. I would not carry more than \$35.00 of money across the border. I spent twelve days in Switzerland traveling the whole country of Switzerland before coming back to Tennessee. That was a great vacation. I was accepted as a temporary citizen. I had a rations card. It was good for my stay there. We rode the trains. I rode 2nd class on Swiss trains. I've been to _____, Zermatt, Zurich. They were beautiful cities. That was September or October of 1945. I wound up to where I had enough points and we had to leave before daylight. We were way up on the Yugoslav border and we caught a train. There was a guy who was strictly a misfit. I knew some misfits in the military. He was good and wouldn't harm anything. I finally got him a job in the kitchen. He could do that. He was Italian. I don't know if he was an American citizen. He had left Italy and gone to the United States and lived in New York. He was drafted in the United States and sent right back to Italy. A little fellow called _____. He use to hang out at the supply room. I talked to him. I liked him. He would do anything for me. He had come down there and had wanted a flashlight. I said, "I can't give you a flashlight. Your job doesn't call for a flashlight." He said, "Well I don't know why because I get up before daylight and go to the kitchen." I said well, "Let, me see what I can do." I went down there and got on the truck and here came running out of the kitchen. I guess the wind was blowing about 40 mph and it was cold. He came running, he said, "Hey, hey, hey!" He had an old barracks bag. He said, "I have got something here that you might want." He threw it up on the truck. It had canned food, canned beef and things that he had gotten out of the kitchen. What I didn't eat we traded for something to eat on the road. We went from northern Italy to Naples which was about 900 something miles by train for four or five days and the rail system was still in bad shape. It was used for an old diesel engine that was shot. The electric system did very well. We got down to a little town called _____ which was a town south of Naples. Not ____ but Bagnoli. Bagnoli was the hometown of Sophia Loren. She was twelve years old when I was there. At that place there had been a girl's school and the Army had some Army cots in there. That was the first bed I had had since I got out of the hospital. I had a bed in Switzerland. We stayed there about five or six days and we were put in group numbers. This group was going to Fort Knox. I remember my group number very well; it was 1240. Somebody was going to Camp Adbury, Indiana which was separation centers. Others of us were going to various other places. We got in there and I hadn't been there but a minute and somebody said that they had a place that you could get all the cocoa you could dream of if you want it. I hadn't seen cocoa in awhile. I spent several days down there eating peanuts and cocoa. Then we got to rumor that someone said there were two aircraft carriers that had come out of the Pacific specially to take men home. What they had done was they had taken the hornet and the wasp two of the biggest ones that they had at the time and brought them. They had taken all the planes off and on the hangar there they had bunks six or seven high all the way down and through the middle that carried seventy-three men on there. Several times during the day they would call out an order number. We would assemble all out in front _____. Of course

we were all ready to go. They were calling out all kinds of numbers and guys were hitting the ground running. I thought I was going to miss it. But one of the last numbers they called and I had been there five or six days was 1240. I fell out about 9 o'clock in the morning and they took us down and there stood the wasp. I got out and went right out on the hangar deck. It was warm there. When we left northern Italy it was cold. They told us to get our stuff up on the hangar deck. We had a duffle bag then.

The tape stopped recording.