

**Charles James Austin**  
**Sergeant Major**  
**Narrator**

**Wayne Clarke**  
**New York State Military Museum's Oral History Project**  
**Interviewer**

**June 9, 2009**  
**Issac C. Griswold Library, Whitehall, NY**

**WC:** Today is the 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 2009. We are at the Isaac C. Griswold Library in Whitehall, New York. My name is Wayne Clarke, and I am with the New York State Military Museum out of Saratoga Springs, New York. Sir, for the record, could you please state your full name and date and place of birth, please?

**CJA:** Charles James Austin; September 20, 1943; Ticonderoga, New York.

**WC:** Did you attend school in Fort Ticonderoga?

**CJA:** No. I attended school in Whitehall.

**WC:** Did you graduate from high school?

**CJA:** Yes, I did, in 1961.

**WC:** At that point, did you go on to any further schooling? Or did you go into the service?

**CJA:** I went into the service.

**WC:** You went into the Marine Corps.

**CJA:** Yes.

**WC:** And why did you pick the Marines?

**CJA:** Two of my friends went, so I signed too.

**WC:** Did you have any family members who had been in the service?

**CJA:** No.

**WC:** Where did you go for your basic training?

**CJA:** Paris Island, South Carolina.

**WC:** Was that your first time away from home?

**CJA:** Yes.

**WC:** What was the training like there?

**CJA:** I think it was the first time I had ever been really taxed. They push you to one hundred and ten percent; training was very rough.

**WC:** And how long was that training for?

**CJA:** Thirteen weeks.

**WC:** Had you ever fired a weapon before?

**CJA:** Yes.

**WC:** So you were familiar with guns?

**CJA:** I was definitely familiar with them, but I was not familiar with the different positions that the Marine Corps had you shooting at.

**WC:** And what type of rifle did you train with?

**CJA:** M1 Garand

**WC:** Oh, you had the Garand back then?

**CJA:** 30-06

**WC:** Once you completed your basic training, where did you go next?

**CJA:** Infantry Training Regiments at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina for four weeks, and then on to Cherry Point, North Carolina. I and eighteen other members of my platoon were selected to become cooks. We were together at Cherry Point for quite some time, and then went on to the Cuban Crisis in 1962. We went back to Cherry Point after that.

**WC:** Okay, let's start off with Cherry Point. You went to cook school there?

**CJA:** I went to cook school at Montford Point—Camp Lejeune.

**WC:** How long was cook school?

**CJA:** Six weeks.

**WC:** Then, when you came back, you were deployed during the Cuban Missile Crisis?

**CJA:** Yes.

**WC:** Do you want to tell us about what that was like—what it entailed?

**CJA:** I was deployed to Key West, Florida. I believe I was there for two to three months, and then back to Cherry Point. I did get to see John F. Kennedy while I was down there. Of course, I stood so far back on the airfield that I could barely make out who he was.

**WC:** Did you have any other duties besides cooking?

**CJA:** Not at that time.

**WC:** And when that was over, you went back to Cherry Point?

**CJA:** Yes, back to Cherry Point for another six to eight months, and then on to Okinawa.

**WC:** What was your impression of Okinawa when you got off the plane?

**CJA:** It was different; odors were different. It was very, very warm with a very high humidity.

**WC:** And your duty assignment was to be a cook?

**CJA:** At 3<sup>rd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> Service Regiment, Third Marine Division. [Nodding]

**WC:** What did your typical day entail? I mean, did you have to get up at two o'clock in the morning...

**CJA:** I got up at approximately five o'clock in the morning and went immediately to work because I was the only cook we had for about three months.

**WC:** So you handled all three meals?

**CJA:** Yes. It was a company mess [hall] with approximately 170 men.

**WC:** And what did you have for kitchen help? Was it civilians or strictly GIS.

**CJA:** I had Okinawans. I had five Okinawans working there; they were very pleasant people to work with. I was there for about four months, then went to 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 9<sup>th</sup> Marines T.A.D. [Temporary Additional Duty] to feed the rifle range crew.

**WC:** Now, was that on Okinawa also?

**CJA:** Okinawa [nodding], but as I got there, they had messed up my orders—it should have been 2/9 instead of 3/9—so the first question the master gunnery sergeant had was, “Do you know how to operate a field range?” “Yes, I do.” “Good. You’re going on with us to Japan.” [It was] Mainland Japan, at that time. “But,” I said, “I’m supposed to be with the Rifle Range crew.” “Your orders,” he said, “say ‘3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 9<sup>th</sup> Marines.’ We’re leaving in two days.” So I went to Camp Fuji, Japan with them [and] made Operation Backpack with them in Taiwan.

**WC:** Now what rank were you at that time?

**CJA:** Lance corporal... Then back to Okinawa for about three months, then rotated back to the States.

**WC:** Now during that period, were you the head cook?

**CJA:** No. I was under other people at that time.

**WC:** And you rotated back to the States...

**CJA:** I went to Brooklyn Navy Yard. That happened to have been at the time of The World’s Fair, so we did a lot of *troop and stomp* out at the World’s Fair.

**WC:** That would have been about what—’64?

**CJA:** ’64 and ’65. [Nodding]

**WC:** How did you like being stationed down there?

**CJA:** I enjoyed it; it was far different than the Fleet Marine Force.

**WC:** What kind of housing did you have—or barracks?

**CJA:** I lived in a barracks—in a four-story barracks.

**WC:** Anything unusual going on there at that time?

**CJA:** Well, the barracks included a post exchange [store], a small gedunk—or restaurant, a bowling alley on the top floor, and a movie theater, so everything was contained right there on the barracks.

**WC:** And how long were you there for?

**CJA:** I was there for approximately one year.

**WC:** Okay.

**CJA:** Then, I was due for discharge...

**WC:** In '65?

**CJA:** [Nods] I extended for two years. Actually, anyone who got out after one August—that was in 1965—was automatically extended for four months. Because my old outfit—3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 9<sup>th</sup> Marines—had gone in on a 9<sup>th</sup> Marine's expedition force to Vietnam, I felt some obligation and extended two years to go to Vietnam. It was explained to me by the sergeant major at that time that I would not lose my options of a duty station or anything else by extending two years. Well, I extended two years, went to Vietnam, and was in the Lima Battery 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 4<sup>th</sup> Marines. I became infatuated with artillery and tried to get my MOS—Military Occupation Specialty—changed to artillery.

**WC:** Were you successful in that?

**CJA:** Not at that time. I did get a secondary MOS of 0811, which is artillery.

**WC:** Now, as a secondary MOS, what would your job have been—or what was it?

**CJA:** A corporal at the time I picked up the MOS. No matter what field you're in, you go to an artillery battery, and whatever you are doing—if it does not pertain to a fire mission—you will be on one gun to which you were assigned. You could be an ammo carrier; you could be a loader; you could be about anything on a gun, except a section chief.

**WC:** So your secondary MOS was basically on-the-job training?

**CJA:** Yes.

**WC:** And you still served as a cook besides?

**CJA:** Yes. And I extended [for] two six-month tours over there.

**WC:** And whereabouts in Vietnam were you?

**CJA:** I was as far south as Chu Lai, and north as the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone] or place called Rockpile.

**WC:** And that was in 1967?

**CJA:** '65, '66, '67. [Nodding]

**WC:** Okay. What was life like in Vietnam during that period? Were you under rocket or artillery attack?

**CJA:** If you're in a military outfit, you're usually in a very stationary position. We were subject to mortar attacks; we were hit with ground forces on numerous occasions.

**WC:** What about rocket attacks?

**CJA:** The only time we caught any rockets were when we were in Da Nang area and they used rockets as an area weapon. They were shooting at Da Nang Air Base and a lot of times they fell short.

**WC:** Were you involved in any of the ground attack fighting?

**CJA:** Yes.

**WC:** What about casualties? Did your unit suffer very many?

**CJA:** We did not suffer heavy casualties. The first two people that we lost were Lance Corporal Knight and Staff Sergeant Montague [Spelling]. The lance corporal was a wireman and the staff sergeant was a communications chief. That was in early '65. We did not receive any casualties until late '67, and we did not receive casualties like the infantry had.

**WC:** And at that point, did you start out up north and then move down to Chu Lai? Or the other way around?

**CJA:** Started off in the Da Nang area—right near Freedom Hill. We moved from there to Hill 55, and from there back to the Da Nang area, and we supported many operations. In the artillery outfit, you may be supporting two to three operations at a time. In the three years I spent there, I was credited with forty-three operations.

**WC:** Were you promoted during that time period?

**CJA:** I was promoted from lance corporal to corporal... No, I'm sorry—I was promoted from corporal to sergeant. I was promoted from sergeant to staff sergeant on my tour in 1969. In fact, I made a combat promotion at that time.

**WC:** So, in '69, had you been rotated back to the States...

**CJA:** I had been rotated back to the States in September of '67. I was at Quantico, Virginia—Artillery Demonstration Battery. I rotated back to Vietnam in 1969—February 1969.

**WC:** And at that point, whereabouts did they send you in Vietnam?

**CJA:** We were on Hill 65. I got there the day after they had a ground attack. I believe they lost three men and a couple people wounded.

**WC:** Now, whereabouts in Vietnam was that?

**CJA:** Hill 65, I believe, is southwest of Da Nang.

**WC:** Was that what they referred to as the Two Corps [II Corps] area?

**CJA:** No. That was still One Corps [I Corps] area and that was near The Arizona Territory.

**WC:** And were you still cooking at that point? Or were you strictly artillery?

**CJA:** When I went back to Vietnam, my orders at that time were to work in my secondary MOS of 0811 Artillery. So I did that until the mess sergeant rotated and the captain made a deal with me, and I ran the mess hall and was section chief of the howitzer *base piece* [audio unclear] until I got two cooks online there and my services were no longer required.

**WC:** So, at that point you had about ten years in the Corps?

**CJA:** Yes—a little over nine. And at that time I made a combat promotion to staff sergeant—I made it in the artillery field—and they changed my MOS to artillery.

**WC:** Now, do you want to explain how you got that combat promotion?

**CJA:** We were being mortared—and being mortared extensively. I could see the muzzle flashes—where it was coming from. I requested permission to fire on it, and received that permission. My first round was a little bit low, so I requested permission to fire another round. Fired it, and had secondary explosions that blew up the mortar site, which was in the mouth of a cave.

**WC:** And at that point you basically ended the attack on the unit?

**CJA:** Yes.

**WC:** Were there other mortars?

**CJA:** No.

**WC:** That was it...

**CJA:** That was it. Actually, they had two mortars they were alternating with.

**CW:** Okay. During your time in Vietnam, were you able to collect any war trophies? You mentioned earlier—before we went on tape—that you were a collector of memorabilia. Did you bring anything back with you?

**CJA:** Nothing.

**CW:** Okay. Did you get to go on any R&R during that period?

**CJA:** We went on numerous R&Rs.

**CW:** Whereabouts did you go?

**CJA:** We went to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur [in] Malaysia, Okinawa, Taiwan—twice, and Hong Kong.

**CW:** So you were out of county quite a bit over the course of several years?

**CJA:** They [R&R trips] were five days at a time.

**CW:** During your tours, did you get to see any USO shows or Bob Hope...

**CJA:** Because I was in the battery the longest, I was offered a chance to go see a Bob Hope show, but I didn't care to go.

**CW:** Did anything else out of the ordinary happen during that tour in '69?

**CJA:** No. The lieutenant colonel that put me in for the combat promotion to staff sergeant went on to become a three-star—General Barker—and I saw him right after I made sergeant major in New Hampshire.

**CW:** And I'm sure he remembered you...

**CJA:** He definitely remembered me, and I had just put on my sergeant major chevron a week before his arrival and I told him, "Had I known you were coming out, I would have had you put my first staff NCO on—and my last one." He said he wished I had waited too.

**CW:** After you rotated back to the States at the end of that tour in Vietnam, whereabouts did you end up?

**CJA:** Back at Quantico. I was at Quantico for probably about six months and went to embassy school.

**CW:** What was that school like?

**CJA:** It was a very hard school. I was dropped from the school—on the last day of school they dropped five of us NCOs. They told us it wasn't anything that we had done or anything else, but it was needs of the Marine Corps. I always felt it was because we were staff NCOs and we were not married at that time, and most embassies would much rather have you being married and have a social life.

**CW:** I see.



**CJA:** But all of us NCOs got dropped and they told us to go see our monitors, and whatever was available that we qualified for, was ours. So I saw my monitor, and it happened to be Captain Carole [Spelling?]. I knew Captain Carole from Okinawa—he was the 0811 Monitor—and he wanted to know where I wanted to go. I said, “Someplace warmer than here.” I was offered Bermuda and I said, “No. I just came back from overseas.” I was offered Charleston, North Carolina; I was offered to be placed in some [audio unclear] Marine barracks in California. Then they said, “Key West” and I said, “My God!” I was there and I enjoyed it, and I went back to Key West; I spent four years there.

**CW:** During that period were you promoted to gunnery sergeant?

**CJA:** No. I left there and I was on the promotion list and I was selected when I was home on leave, at which [time] my sergeant major called me and notified me, gave me my number, and told me I’d be promoted in approximately June or July of 1975.

**CW:** All right. And where were you when you were promoted?

**CJA:** I was back on Okinawa—I had a tour on Okinawa—and while we were taking our tactical test in a northern training area we got called back to Camp Hague, which was an artillery base. We were told to turn in deuce-in- [audio unclear] and our 105 howitzers, and we were to draw Gamma Goats and Four-Deuce mortars out of Cadre, and we were on our way to the Evacuation of Cambodia.

**CW:** Now, do you want to go into some detail on that—on what that was like?

**CJA:** We stayed right on the ship; they never utilized us. I’m sorry. It wasn’t the Evac... We were on the Evacuation of Saigon first and we stayed on the ships and did not even deploy off the ship. Three months later—I believe it was—or thirty days later, we went down for the Evacuation of Cambodia. Once again, we stayed on the ships.

**CW:** Now, did that involve helicopters bringing people in from the mainland?

**CJA:** Yes. Down in Saigon—when we evacuated—we were out in the harbor and it was a devastating affair. They were on rusted out hulls [or hulks] of ships out there and packed back-to-back on the ships with no place for them to sit down. They were heaving bodies overboard constantly—mostly young people, and infants, and older people. There were so many helicopters being flown out of there that they’d touch down on the ship and then they’d push them right over the fantail of the ship into the ocean. We witnessed one that came in and went to land on a ship and hit the side of the ship and went into the water.

**CW:** Now, were these helicopters being flown by the South Vietnamese army?

**CJA:** Yes, they were. We had to ward off helicopters of other ships; we were out there with shotguns warding off helicopters. Certain ships, they couldn't land on, and as soon as they touched down on the ships, they were pushed right off the fantail. They took nothing off of them; they didn't even take the radios out of them. They were brand new helicopters.

**CW:** Now what did you do with all of the civilians that were on board ship?

**CJA:** They were not on the ship with us. I had the unfortunate pleasure of boarding one of the ships that they had been on and they used the Marines for a clean up force, basically. They had one compartment that everyone just walked by and defecated into. Fortunately, it had double doors on one side of it, so we opened it up and just sprayed it out with a fire hose. That was it as far as the Evacuation of Saigon.

**CW:** Was the Evacuation of Cambodia similar?

**CJA:** I didn't see as much there as I had in Saigon. We were quite far out at sea there. Then, those with the 4<sup>th</sup> Marines went down for the Recapture of the Mayaguez. Once again, we stayed on the ship for a back up force. That was it—saw nothing there. Our battalion executive officer, Major Porter, raised a flag on the Mayaguez when they steamed out. I was attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Marines at that time.

**CW:** Okay. And where did you go next?

**CJA:** That was in 1975, and I came back to the States and went to Twentynine Palms, California. I was a battery gunnery sergeant of the 1st 175 Howitzers and the major of that outfit was Clifford G. Blazie [Spelling] —Major Clifford G. Blazie —and he had been my executive officer on my first tour in Vietnam when he was a second lieutenant and I was a corporal. I left Twentynine Palms and went to Coronado, California, and went to nuclear weapons school in Coronado for six weeks.

**CW:** And what did that school entail?

**CJA:** That was all classified. We worked on 155 nuclear rounds—8" nuclear rounds—and two engineer weapons.

**CW:** And, once you completed that school...

**CJA:** I was on the East Coast Nuclear Weapons Team. There were three teams on each coast and three teams on Okinawa. You do two years in the States and rotate to Okinawa for your last tour.

**CW:** Now, in the States, were you based in one camp? Or did you rotate...

**CJA:** I was stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. It entailed training artillery men in the handling and care of a nuclear weapon.

**CW:** And then you rotated back to Okinawa again?

**CJA:** Then I went back to Okinawa. Then I came back to the States again—I guess it was '79.

**CW:** Did you get married and have a family during that period at all?

**CJA:** Unfortunately, I've been married many times; I've been married four times.

**CW:** I know the military life isn't always conducive to having a family—going from post to post...

**CJA:** [Nods] It's a hard life for a family. It's especially hard on kids going to school. I've got kids that went to school in Florida, North Carolina, California, Virginia and New York before they graduated—and New Hampshire.

**CW:** During your career—aside from the MOS type schools—did you have to attend any sort of military or NCO academies? [Paraphrased]

**CJA:** I never went to a NCO academy. When I came back from Okinawa the last time, I went back to Quantico. I went to officer candidate school as a company [sentence incomplete - audio unclear]. I was there for two years.

**CW:** Let me just go back. Tell us about when and where you made E8. [1st/Master Sergeant]

**CJA:** While I was with Nuclear Ordinance Platoon in Okinawa, I sewed on my first sergeant chevron. They took me out of Nuclear Ordinance Platoon and I went to 9<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion. I was a headquarters company first sergeant.

**CW:** How did you like being a first sergeant?

**CJA:** I enjoyed being a first sergeant. It's a leadership position—you get to interact with the troops very much. You hold all the formations; you read people their rights when they're being disciplined.

**CW:** Did you have many problems with troops being disciplined...

**CJA:** It was a little different being in the Headquarters Company of 9<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion; it was the first time I was ever in a unit that had women in it. I believe we had twenty-two females—mostly working in the mess hall and administration, [and] a few truck drivers. It was very different for me.

**CW:** And you were first sergeant for two years?

**CJA:** I was first sergeant for approximately four years.

**CW:** Four years in the same unit?

**CJA:** No. I went from 9<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion to... I came back to Quantico, Virginia and I went to officer candidate school; I was company first sergeant.

**CW:** What was that like?

**CJA:** Long days—many hours of work. Tough physical conditioning because you were expected to do everything that the candidates did.

**CW:** Did you have to lead the PT formations in the morning?

**CJA:** Yes, indeed. It was a fine experience.

**CW:** Okay—and after you left that position, whereabouts did you go next?

**CJA:** I left there and went to inspector instructor duty [in] Manchester, New Hampshire.

**CW:** What year was that, approximately?

**CJA:** 1981. I went to Manchester, New Hampshire and worked out of the reserves center—25<sup>th</sup> Marines. I spent approximately three years with them [doing] a lot of cold weather training.

**CW:** You were first sergeant then?

**CJA:** Yes. I&I duty—you work with counterparts of the reserves. I was a first sergeant, so I had a first sergeant that was a reservist that I worked with. You were sort of their mentors. Did a lot of training up in Vermont—cold weather training: skiing, cross-country, snowshoeing.

**CW:** Did you see any real differences between the men on active duty and the men that were under you in the reserves?

**CBJ:** My experience was that they [reservists] were a little bit older. The young enlisted [man] was an outstanding Marine—as good as his counterparts on active duty. The officers [reservists], in my opinion, lacked a lot—not their fault. Most of the time as a regular officer [active duty] you go to school as a lieutenant; you go to school as a captain; you go as a major and lieutenant colonel. Unfortunately, most of these gentlemen [reservists] did not have the opportunity to go to those schools. But as far as motivation—well-motivated groups. The 25<sup>th</sup> Marines has been involved in all of these campaigns since that time.

**CW:** Now you ended up participating in Desert Storm?

**CJA:** That was later. I finished my tour on I&I duty. I was selected for sergeant major, and promoted to sergeant major. At the same time, Sergeant Major Hunt had retired from recruiting duty in Manchester, New Hampshire, [so] they sent me across the street and I became the recruiting sergeant major. I was in Manchester for approximately six to eight months and they moved our headquarters down to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I was on recruiting duty for four years. It was called Northern New England and encompassed Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire. We had thirty-six recruiters, the colonel, myself, the executive officer and the master gunnery sergeant for training. We were on the road every day of the week. Each one of us had a different station and we'd normally spend three to five days at that station helping to motivate the Marine recruiter.

**CW:** Any problems maintaining quotas at all?

**CJA:** For the four years I was with them I'm proud to say that we made quota—reenlistment quota and shipping quota—and overship for Boston on numerous occasions. Shipping is your most important mission—and we covered other stations' butts. We did very well.

**CW:** At the end of that four-year time period, what happened next?

**CJA:** I called my monitor in Washington, DC and he and I did not see eye-to-eye on many things, and he told me I was going back to Okinawa. I said, "Okay. Who am I going with." He told me I was going to base. I said, "I'm not going to Okinawa base. I'll go to Okinawa division, but I will not go to base."

**CW:** Now what's the difference between base and division?

**CJA:** Base [means] you're going to stay on that island for twelve months. Division [means] you're going to hit Hong Kong; you're going to hit Taiwan, Philippines; you're going to travel all over South East Asia. I just didn't want to be on the island for a year. He said, "If you don't want that, you can send me your retirement request." I said, "I will fax it to you today." And I did—and I was approved. Approximately three weeks later I get a call from the new sergeant major at headquarters Marine Corps. His name was Joe Means [Spelling?] and he was an artillery man just like me. We were gun buddies together in Vietnam and he asked me why I was getting out. I told him why I was getting out and he said, "I got a better deal for you, so I already pulled your retirement." He said, "I'm going to send you down to Headquarters 25<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment; you'll be the regiment sergeant major." I said, "Well, that sounds very good." I said, "Why is that? That's in Worcester, Mass." He said, "Well, I've retired about six [to] seven sergeant majors that didn't want to go there." I said, "Cost of living?" He said, "No. They don't want to work for Colonel Steed." [Spelling?] I said, "What's wrong with Colonel Steed?" He said, "He's got some very strenuous exercise policies and he does not want a sergeant major that's retired on active duty." So I went down and I met Colonel Billy Steed, and it took me three months to get in shape to do all of the things he wanted me to do. Five-mile boot runs—timed event; combat physical fitness run—twenty-seven minute timed event,

forty-five pound pack, rifle—no matter what rank you were—and a helmet and two full canteens. I completed all of his policy requirements and he and I got along quite well. He had been commissioned from a gunnery sergeant and had been in high-speed units his whole career. I enjoyed working with him and had a very good time. I lost a son in an automobile accident who had just gotten out of the Marine Corps and I thought it best at that time to retire, so I did.

**CW:** And what year was that?

**CJA:** That was in August of 1990. I had a wonderful retirement ceremony off the USS Constitution in Boston—thanks to Colonel Steed—and a lot of my friends from recruiting RS Northern New England were there. All of the sergeant majors from the various units were there, and many of the reserve troops that I had worked with came at their own expense. I had a very good retirement—a very good career.

**CW:** How long were you retired before you were called back?

**CJA:** I retired in August of 1990 and [in] October I went to correction officers school in Albany [New York]. I was working at Sing Sing and was actually called back by the sergeant major of the Marine Corps, and [he] wanted to know if I'd be willing to come back in. I told him, "Yes, I would" thinking that I would get a battalion or regiment or something. And he said, "No. We're calling people back who have had experience in making notifications to next of kin." So we formed casualty assistant units—I believe it was four units out of Albany—and fortunately we had to make NO notifications. I stayed on active duty. General Walker, Air Force general, requested support at the Westover Air Force Base in welcoming people home. He had one hanger dedicated to welcoming everyone coming home. I worked the hanger for two months and it was by far the best duty I ever had.

**CW:** And what happened at the end of those two months?

**CJA:** Actually, they gave me very short notice; they never even gave me a physical when they discharged me. They discharged me on a third of July. I never got notified until the Forth of July, so I ended up having to pay my last day at the hotel myself. Then, I went back to Sing Sing to work, and that terminated my [military] career.

**CW:** How long did you stay at Sing Sing?

**CJA:** I stayed at Sing Sing for approximately a year, transferred to Greene, worked a couple of years at Greene—that's near Coxsackie, and from there I went to Green Haven and I spent approximately fifteen years at Greene Haven. I just retired twenty-seven of December last year [2008].

**CW:** And I'm sure you've probably stayed in contact with people you've served with over the years?

**CJA:** I have not met [with] too many of the people I was in contact with. I stayed in contact with my battery gunnery sergeant from my first tour in Vietnam, Major Crawford. [Audio unclear, but narrator mentions major's first name.] In fact, when I was sergeant major of recruiting in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, I had him out for guest speaker and he flew out from California. That was his last formal event; he was deceased about six months later.

**CW:** Did you join any veterans' organizations?

**CJA:** [Nods] I belong to the American Legion. I've belonged to the Legion for probably about thirty-five years.

**CW:** Do you belong to the Marine Corps League?

**CJA:** I joined the Marine Corps League in Ridgefield, Connecticut [but] never made any meetings, so I've been requested to make the ones [meetings] over here in Vermont, and I've also been requested to make one in Glens Falls [New York]. I don't like going to meetings, and I don't like going to events and stuff like that. I've got my own thing I do with collecting.

**CW:** You mentioned collecting and doing exhibits. Do you want to tell us about that?

**CJA:** I've been collecting Marine Corps memorabilia for approximately twenty years. I have many uniforms; I have uniforms from the Spanish-American War up through World War II. I particularly like the Marine Corps emblems; officers, early enlisted. I have emblems that date back to the Spanish-American War. I have [an] officer's emblem that dates back to 1904. I have wide chevrons, which they used up until 1922; I have a complete set of those. I have many medals; I like the early medals. I have groups of medals—probably fifteen groups of medals. The early medals were very neat because they were numbered; they can be researched, in most cases. If you're lucky enough to get them with the Marine Corps Good Conduct, they were usually engraved with dates of first enlistment and serial numbers. I display normally for a man out of Patterson, New York who runs The Dufflebag, which is a store that sells old uniforms and stuff. He basically pretty much got me interested in collecting patches, and that's where I basically started.

**CW:** Do you belong to the American Society of Military Insignia Collectors?

**CJA:** Yes. And of course I get the Leatherneck Magazine, Simplify Magazine. I look at the weapons they're using today and it looks like space age compared to what I used. I went from the M1 to the M14 to the M16, and now I guess they're on the M16A2s, A3s.

**CW:** How do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life?

**CJA:** I got a lot older in there—hopefully I've matured some.

**CW:** If you had it to do over again, would you have made any changes?

**CJA:** I think we all would have made changes in our life, but I'm pretty happy with my career and what I've accomplished.

**CW:** Okay. Well, thank you so much for your interview.

**CJA:** Well, thank you for your time, sir.