

**Morton Achiron
Narrator**

**Mike Russert
Wayne Clarke
New York State Military Museum
Interviewers**

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New York Division of Military and Naval Affairs,
Latham, NY**

MR: This is an interview at the New York Division of Military and Naval Affairs, Latham, New York. Today is the 5th of June, 2003. The time is approximately 3pm. The interviewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke. Can you give us your full name; date of birth and place of birth?

MA: Morton Achiron, its spelled Achiron. My date of birth is September 26, 1925. My place of birth is New York City.

MR: What was your educational background?

MA: High School.

MR: Do you remember where you were and what your reaction was when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

MA: Yes, I was about 12, no wait, 16 years old and in the theater when they mentioned Pearl Harbor had been bombed. I couldn't imagine where Pearl Harbor was, well, we all found out quickly where that was. At the time, I was a little young for service, and I was hoping they'd keep the war going so I could go in there and clean it all up.

MR: When you went into the Marine Corps, were you drafter or did you enlist?

MA: Well, with the Marine Corp, I don't think they took draftees, so I was inducted, discharged, and then enlisted into the Marine Corps. So, it's a technicality I guess.

MR: So, did you pick the Marine Corps?

MA: Yes.

MR: Why did you?

MA: Well, at that age you're a little blood thirsty.

MR: Where did you have induction?

MA: In New York at the Grand Central Palace. There was an induction center there.

MR: Where did you go for your Basic Training?

MA: Perris Island, South Carolina.

MR: Can you tell us about your basic training and how long you were there?

MA: It was about eight weeks, but at the time, they cut it a little short because they wanted to get you over to fight as fast as possible.

MR: Do you recall some of the things you did or the things you saw while there?

MA: No, not really. But it didn't take long to realize that the enemy wasn't the Japs, but rather the Drill Instructors.

MR: How old were you when you went in?

MA: It was about a week before I finished high school. Actually, they gave you a two week furlough. So actually, it was about a week after I graduated High School that I went in.

MR: Ok, so you ended up as a Forward Observer in the Artillery. So what basic training or extra training did you receive?

MA: I went to Radio School. When I went over seas, I was in the 28th replacement draft. I wasn't assigned to anybody. So the Army I guess is the same as the Marine Corps, so there is a fierce loyalty to your comrades. So, we went over there as replacements and you didn't know anybody. So, after Iwo Jima, I went back to Guam, back to my old outfit, there was loyalty then, and the loyalty really started there. But on Iwo Jima, things were like a steno pool on a beach, they needed so many radio operators in one place or another and they kept shipping everyone out to various places, telling us you go there, or over there. I really didn't know anybody.

MR: Did you go in on the first wave?

MA: No, the 3rd Division was apart of the floating reserve for the 4th and 5th Divisions. So, it was about D-Day plus 4 when they got called in.

MR: So you went in D4?

MA: About then.

MR: What do you recall about the bombardment? Were you there for the bombardment?

MA: Well, yes. I saw it from the ships, the shelling of the beaches.

MR: Were you up on Deck?

MA: Yes.

MR: Could you tell us your reactions to that?

MA: I was surprised to see the battleships unloading their guns and the impact it had upon the ships. It pushed the ships back and tilted them a bit to their sides. Later on, we found it; it wasn't doing a heck of a lot of good.

MR: Did you see the flag rising at all?

MA: No, not from the shore. From the ships we all saw a flag up.

MR: So, why don't you tell us about where you went and what you did? Just tell us your story.

MA: Well, when I went ashore, I saw lots of debris around. I recall seeing one hand sticking out of the beach. I don't know whose hand it was. I hope it was Japanese. But I guess they just bulldozed some of the stuff out of the way. But I remember after landing, they come down looking for radio men, an artillery man, infantrymen. Like I said, it was like a steno pool, they told men "you go there or you go there."

MR: Where were you assigned?

MA: The 12th Regiment. I was assigned to an Artillery Battery as a Forward Observer, which meant I was at the Front directing fire. Mostly, I directed fire where they told me to direct fire.

MR: Can you tell us some of your experiences or what you saw while there?

MA: There were times when the enemy would come out at you, and you'd shot at them. Most of the time you weren't the only one shooting, so you kind of hoped your shot counted. But you never really knew.

MR: So, what kind of weapon or sidearm did you carry?

MA: An M1, which was standard stuff.

MR: Where did you go on from Iwo Jima?

MA: Where could you go?

MR: Could you tell us where you saw some of the action? What were you apart of?

MA: Well, at the time they didn't have a name for it. But my outfit supported the 21st Marine Regiment, a combat infantry regiment. We went where they went. They had the Forward Observers with each regiment. I was professor easy 9 3.

MR: Could you explain what you did as a Forward Observer?

MA: Well, you have an officer there and he kind of directs the fire. They have graphs and maps and they just tell you where they want you to direct the fire. It wasn't until I got back to Guam that I learned what I was actually doing.

MR: So it was more an on the job training type of deal?

MA: Oh yes, (chuckles) It was on the job training.

MR: How long were you on Iwo Jima?

MA: Oh, we got there about d-day plus 4 and where were there, well, it was about March 26th that it was counted as secured. So, it was about two weeks after that we went back to Guam.

MR: What did you do at Guam?

MA: Further training, field exercises. They showed me what I was supposed to be doing.

MR: Did you see any other combat?

MA: No, just Iwo Jima.

MR: What were you training for? The invasion of Japan?

MA: Yes, for what, for when the war was over?

MR: No, I mean when you went to Guam, when the war wasn't over yet.

MA: Well yes. We never knew what the next invasion would be. I was on Guam when President Roosevelt died.

MR: What was your reaction to that?

MA: I didn't know who the VP was! I was also there when they dropped the first Atomic Bomb and the second one on Japan.

MR: What was your reaction to that?

MA: I thought it would expedite the war. In fact, when the war was over, they started to teach us Japanese. They taught us a few of the basic words and then they promptly sent us to china. (Both Laugh).

MR: So what did you do in China?

MA: Guard duty more or less.

MR: Where were you in China?

MA: Taishan. At that time, the Third Division broke up and joined the First Division in China.

MR: So your duty was to handle Radio Operations?

MA: Yes.

MR: Can you tell us any little ante dotes that you had happen?

MA: When I was in China or on Iwo Jima?

MR: Anywhere you like.

MA: Well, after Guam, in China, it was kind of simple. There were civilians around us, stores. It felt like home a bit and helped us acclimate back to civilian life then. In Taishan, it was like an international city. They had a Russian Sector, a French sector, an Italian Sector. I noticed a lot of Italian Marines there. They were more or less stranded because they didn't have the where with all to or know how to get home. But it was a good place to go from the Islands, and then back home.

MR: When were you discharged?

MA: I was discharged Mother's day, 1946.

MR: How did you get back?

MA: By ship actually.

MR: Where were you discharged?

MA: Well, we landed in San Diego. But I was discharged in Bay Ridge, Maryland.

MR: Did you ever go to any USO shows? See any USO shows?

MA: No.

MR: How you think your military service affected your life?

MA: Well, when you look back, you realize it took some of the prime years away. I was really too young to care about it at the time. In fact, at that age, I felt sorry for the older guys, guys around 30. (Laughs). They were use to drinking when they wanted; they were use to women when they wanted. They were use to a lot of things. I was fresh out of high school, so I was use to taking orders from parents or from teachers, my boss or something. So it didn't phase me, I didn't think I was giving anything up. I wasn't a drinker or a wonderer then. Now I am! (Chuckles).

MR: Did you ever make use of the GI Bill?

MA: I got a job at the Arsenal. I don't know if that helped. But as far as formal schooling, I was first an Apprentice Machinist. Then I became a Journeyman, it was then that I started looking for a better job. I ended up being an inspector by the time I retired from the Arsenal.

MR: Did you ever make use of the 5220 club?

MA: For a few weeks. It got to be more degrading than helpful. You go there and feel like a good do nothing and feel happy about it.

MR: Did you ever keep in touch with anyone you served with?

MA: No, I was still pretty young then. I didn't have any transportation then. If somebody lived in the other side of the state, I had no way of keeping in touch with them. I did contact the family of one of my friends from boot camp that got killed. I went to his mother in Rye. For a while after we came back, me and a few of the guys went to visit all of the parents. But that's about it you know. Most of the people that I knew that got killed were not local.

MR: Did you join or have you joined any veteran's organizations?

MA: I joined the JWV. I was looking into the 3rd Division and I ran into a guy who belonged to it. He gave me a book of the 3rd Division and of all those who belonged to it. But I looked through the entire book and I didn't recognize anyone in it. It was full of Korean and Vietnam Vets. So, I didn't know anybody there.

MR: Are you still active with the Jewish War Veterans?

MA: No, I don't do a heck of a lot. I do go to meetings. Most of the outfits that I've seen, you volunteer to do something, they pick a committee of six and you're the only one to do anything. So I learned to keep my mouth shut.

MR: How did you end up being from New York City to working here at the Arsenal?

MA: Well, I married a girl from the same apartment complex in New York City. Her sister lived up in Schenectady. We went up to visit a few times. At that time, life in New York City was getting to be preplanned. You grew up, got married; you lived in an apartment, women walked up and down the block when they had children. It just seemed that everything was planned out for you. At that time, New York wasn't too bad yet. It was kind of routine, cookie cutter type of life.

MR: How long did you work at the Arsenal?

MA: I worked there about 25 years, actually 27, they counted military service.

MR: Did you see a lot of changes in your time?

MA: Where, the Arsenal?

MR: Yes.

MA: Well, there are always changes. There were threats of layoffs. I'm surprised it's at the stage it's at now. I have a very high regard for the Arsenal. They have very highly skilled people working there. At the time, and still is, the only government run manufacturing center. I hate to think what were getting our shoes, our metals, and our radio stuff from Japan. We get our stuff from Germany. If you get into a war, you got to be careful who you fight with, because they supplied us with our weaponry. I'd like to see this country more self sufficient. But who am I?

MR: Okay, thank you for your interview. Oh, before I forget, there's one thing I want to show you. Tell us about that. (Hands Morton Achiron a photograph of him as a young man, in uniform).

MA: That was taken on Guam. It was a gift of the 3rd Division. They took pictures of all of us to send home. That was me as a merry youth. (Chuckles).

MR: How old were you when that was taken?

MA: Oh, that had to be December, 1945. Yes, it was December 1945 I had to be about 20. Killer, can you tell by looking at him? (Laughs).

MR: Ok, thank you very much.

MA: You're welcome, thank you very much.