

Arthur T. Robinson
Narrator

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New York State Military Museum
Interviewers

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WC: Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please?

AR: I'm Arthur T. Robinson, forty seven Granite Street, Saratoga Spring, NY.

WC: Where and when were you born?

AR: I was born September fifteen, 1922 down in Ballston Spa instead of a hospital. I was living in Ballston at that time, well my mother was.

WC: Okay. What was your education and background prior entering the service?

AR: I was in Saratoga High school thirty-eight to forty, and then my mother wouldn't sign the paper for me to go into the service so the day after I was eighteen I signed up.

WC: Now, why did you decide to sign up for the military?

AR: Well, my Uncle David Stewart, he was already signed up and I was getting ready to help protect him and he protect me and just wanted to go to the service I guess.

WC: Why did you pick the army just because your Uncle was going in?

AR: Well, National Guard was right here was in town so I went with them.

MR: Oh, you were a part of National Guard too?

AR: Yes. Here this paper. [Show paper] Did you see the paper?

MR: I did see it. Yes. Do you want to hold it up and I'll just focus in on it?

AR: [Shows newspaper] This is a write up of soldiers getting in a train wreck in Saratoga.

MR: Oh yes. I heard about that.

WC: Now were you involved in that at all or did that happen before?

AR: I was on the train when it hit, but it didn't do us any damage. Just women and kids on the track that got killed.

WC: Now was that when you were leaving for maneuvers?

AR: No, I was leaving from Fort McClellan, Alabama.

WC: Okay, for maneuvers?

AR: No, for the year of service.

WC: Oh okay.

AR: No, for a year of service, I signed up for a year of service got stuck for five years.

MR: You can set that down.

WC: Now that was first when you were enlisted?

AR: I moved from Alabama. I stayed in Alabama for a year.

WC: What was the army you when you came here to enlist? Is there you were enlisted at this army?

AR: Yes.

WC: What was it like here?

AR: Well, I don't know. There was upstairs barracks sack where they stayed. But they changed the partition Now it is a lot different.

MR: Was there a lot of activities here? A lot of people coming and going?

AR: Well, there were quit of few soldiers in here. About hundred and ten from when we left, but there wasn't many coming back.

WC: Did you march to the train station from here?

AR: I think we did. Station was right up here on Church Street, top of the hill. The railroad use to go through were Price Chopper is now.

WC: So you when you got on the train were you aware of the accident and people were killed?

AR: Well, we heard people screaming and everything, we knew something had happened. And then they come in and told us what was going on.

WC: Now you went to Alabama, could you tell us going down to Fort McClellan?

AR: Well, we got down there with the snakes and rattlesnakes and poison oak. It was just an open woodlot more or less. We made barracks twelve by twelve and held six people each for the bunks and it was just that gooey mud stick to your shoe and it wasn't much to the place.[Laughed] But when we left, there was all blacktop about the same kind of barracks. We had some crushed stone all through the driveway and everything.

WC: Now is the first time that you really been away from home?

AR: Yes.

WC: Were you every homesick?

AR: No.

WC: Was your Uncle with you?

AR: Yes, at that time. But he was transferred to the Twenty- Fifth Division before we left Fort McClellan. There were bunch of them left, you know it was the twenty fifth.

WC: What were the maneuvers like in the south with the heat?

AR: It was almost bad as the accident that we saw in Saipan and stuff. I got capture down there by the reds [Laughed] down in maneuvers but Japanese never caught me.

MR: How did you get along with the civilians down there?

AR: We get along good. When we first went down in October, it hasn't snowed down there for twenty one years, and it had snowed twenty one inches that one year and said Yankees go back home. [Laughter]

WC: Now was October 1940 that you had gone there. Was this were the hand grenade accident happened?

AR: Well it was down in Tennessee maneuvers.

WC: Could you tell us about that?

AR: Well it wasn't much to say about it too much.

WC: Well you describe the story before could you tell me the story what happened?

AR: I was throwing grenade just to get rid of them because we were getting ready to go off to maneuvers, didn't want to take them back to camp, so we were throwing them over the snow and [unclear]. Each threw a grenade over and it hit the top of mountain and rolled back down the hill towards us and I picked it up and threw it over the [unclear], and just as it got on top of the [unclear], it went off. And we had dynamite, they had them in these bags like wrap them around the tree and set them up with an automobile battery and that tree come down and all the stuff come right back where the Jeep was and we were quite away where it exploded. But the debris come right back down towards us.

WC: After you left Fort McClellan, where did you go?

AR: We went to Camp [unclear] California, and then we were at March Field where we were sited. Then we went to north to Fort Ord and there were seven Cavaliers stationed right along sides of us.

WC: I meant to ask you, when you were at McClellan, what guns were you using? Were you using the O threes?

AR: The M1

WC: Oh you had M1. Did you have the World War I type helmets?

AR: Yes we had the World War I helmets. No it wasn't a helmet it was a hat.

WC: What unit were you assigned to, you were in the Twenty-Seventh Division. What was your regiment and company?

AR: I was in the Company Alpha for a while, then they transferred me to the Third Battalion headquarters, that the head for [unclear].

MR: What did that stand for do you remember? [unclear]

AR: The M Company, L Company, I Company, and K Company. The M company was in Johnstown, the L company was here, I was Monroe, and K was from Glens Falls. I was reading the paper the other day; they were looking for some Michael [unclear] from Company K but he might be from California or any other place but they couldn't locate him. I been looking at the American Legion every month, I joined them you know so they sent me books. And I look every time for somebody from my [unclear] that the only one since I got out of service or since I was in the American Legion.

WC: Where did you go Fort Ord?

AR: We went down to [unclear] Hawaii. The Japanese attacked there in December. We got ordered about in May I guess to April.

WC: Now where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

AR: California.

WC: What was your reaction when you heard about that?

AR: I was getting ready to come home from furlough. They cancelled our furlough. So we got mad at Japanese right off the bat.

MR: Was your year almost up? You're one year in enlistment?

AR: Oh yes. Anybody from thirty five to thirty eight or something like that they got them out. They didn't go into war. Our friend Burton in here he's one of the guys that got out. [unclear] was in our [unclear] before we left, you remember the mayor he made sergeant before he got off the train. Somebody had to be noncommissioned officer. I was acting sergeant most of the time they never getting paid for it. [Laughed]

WC: Now this is [unclear] Jones he ended up going on an airborne unit.

AR: He went up to the one hundred and first or something like that.

WC: Yes, we did an interview of him.

AR: He was pretty good sergeant.

WC: Now, what did you do in Hawaii and how long were you there?

AR: We were there until they decide to go on attack deep down making our atoll. I was on a machine gun going on the alligator.

WC: You went in on alligators?

AR: Yes. And Arthur [unclear] he was from Connecticut on the other tank. He got shot through the head before he got off the [unclear].

WC: Were you in the first going in?

AR: Pretty close to it. We were all together. D Company they went in and when they got half way in they got shot in the back because the Japanese come up all these holes and got them from their back.

WC: What was it like when you went in beach? Was it under fired?

AR: No it didn't seem to be. They had the Japanese Imperial Marine was there, and they were six foot or better. They just got called their before the war so we got them. I got sure went off to the right, and everybody was saying "where's Robbie, where's Robbie?" and I didn't realized how much people like me.

WC: So you are alligator kind of drifted over to the right, then?

AR: No

WC: You were [unclear]. Oh okay.

AR: All the other alligators were riding their straight.

MR: So, how were the Japanese Marines? Were they pretty tough fighters?

AR: They were pretty tough. But like I said in the thing, their equipment wasn't as good as ours. Now M16 I wouldn't give them powder to boom or whatever you want to called because the Japanese kept coming at us with the M1 they never come by us.

WC: So you carried a M1 during the whole war?

AR: Yes.

WC: You found it very reliable weapon?

AR: Yes it was the best thing I ever had.

WC: How long were you on Makin?

AR: Not too long. Got in and out. And the Saipan when we got there I wasn't in there long before I got wounded from June to July.

WC: Where were you in between Makin and Saipan?

AR: We went right from Makin to Saipan.

WC: Oh you did. Were you in the first landing in Saipan?

AR: No they held me back on the ship for a while on Saipan. So I didn't get much of action in there. Only action I got was when I got wounded that was about fifteen or sixteen days later or better.

MR: Do you want to tell us about that?

WC: Do you think there was more fighting on Saipan than Makin?

AR: Well yes because Saipan was a lot bigger island. And there were forty two hundred Japanese there. That why they got killed in the [unclear]. There might have been more than that because [unclear]. Our [unclear] never took any prisoners. They took four men a night to guard them and we didn't want to guard anybody.

WC: How did you get wounded? Can you describe what happened?

AR: I was on patrol after a sniper and the lieutenant was on my left knee and got killed. Sergeant [unclear] on my right knee got shot in the pelvis bone made his legs two inches shorter. And John [unclear] was on the right of him and kneeling down [show where John got shot] and right through his heart. We just went to get that sniper. It turns out there were two hundred of there and [unclear]. Got them the next day and went in after them.

WC: Is that who shot you? Was a sniper?

AR: It was supposed to been a sniper. There were two hundred of them up there. At the time, we didn't know it.

WC: So you were shot through both legs?

AR: Yes.

WC: The upper or lower leg?

AR: [Shows where he got shot] you put your fist to the side where it come out at that time.

MR: Was it one bullet that went through both legs?

AR: Yes. The machine gun because then the rest of bullet went parallel beside my head.

WC: Were you treated on when you were hit? Did someone drag you out?

AR: John [unclear] he got me out of their and put me up on a [unclear] and back down where the medical company was and they treated me there. We went down, they put me in [unclear] on a Jeep on the back end of the Jeep [use hand to show how he was laying] no guns nothing but going down this track about twelve miles bumpy, bump, bump, bump all the way you know the railroad tiles and that probably will be the only safest place to go down the railroad track because probably you'll get blown up on the road with the landmines or something. So got down twelve miles away and we got easy up pop tents that we got on the plane that we went to back to Hawaii it was there for a month and a thirteenth replacement. I was in the hospital for about a month, but we ended up in the thirteenth replacement center then later on I was transfer back to New [unclear] island north west of Australia and that was a Navy Port. And then we went from there to Okinawa. Then the Lieutenant leading us through a wooded area, he got killed right through the head [unclear] Japanese. I was the next guy in line and I was scared to go cross that opening in the wall where the stone way in the path went through it. As we all got through there we turned around and said "let's get the heck out of here." There were four men on a stretcher carrying this Lieutenant out. And finally I said" one guy in the

front and one guy in the back get off the stretcher” and this other guy was carrying the Lieutenant out and we laid him down in the field with the stretcher dragged out of there. We didn’t know how many Japanese were in there but quite a few I guess according to what they shot in the paper. There was a write up about them. We hit the shores of Okinawa there wasn’t too much of going on but in the night time if you left your socks off blue crabs would take your socks away. They were big ones. They were sand crab. But I don’t know if they came out of the oceans or out of the land you know.

MR: Did you suffer any tropical disease like malaria or anything like that?

AR: No I didn’t. My uncle he did. David Stewart he got malaria. He went down to South, I can’t think of the name now.

WC: Now how long were you in Okinawa?

AR: Must have been a month or more. We did have some Japanese prisoners on that island and the Natives. All the Natives were good. We were on the school yard were we were [unclear] there.

MR: What did you have for food? Just k ration and sea ration?

AR: We had the k ration. They wasn’t too bad. They were better than the sea ration. A lot of guys preferred the sea ration, but k ration had packages I think enough to feed about ten men or so and a chocolate bar that I like them but lot of guys didn’t like them and they give it to me.[All laughed]

WC: How did the three action you were in Makin, Saipan, and Okinawa which do you think was the worst?

AR: The Saipan, I would say.

WC: So it sounds like more man around you and yourself were killed or wounded there?

AR: Yes.

WC: Were you there during the typhoon?

AR: No, there didn’t seem like heavy wind or nothing there.

WC: What did you think when you heard about the dropping of atomic bombs?

AR: I wouldn’t know. I was home when that happened.

WC: You were discharged, by then?

AR: September ninth or September seventh I got discharged. Ninth I guess it was.

WC: Do you remember the death of President Roosevelt? Were you home?

AR: Yes.

WC: How did you feel about that?

AR: I don’t recall how I did feel.

WC: Where were you discharged?

AR: Fort Dix.

WC: Did you ever see any USO show while you were oversea?

AR: Oh yes.

WC: Do you remember any of the stars that you saw?

AR: I remember Gloria [unclear].

MR: Did you see Bob Hope?

AR: Bob Hope. There were good [unclear] builders. I was watching the movie one night and the Japanese bombed, planes came over and drop bombs but the bombs landed in the bay instead of on the theater.

WC: After you were discharged did you make use of GI Bill at all?

AR: Yes two weeks. I grew twenty dollars.

WC: Oh the fifty two twenty club.

AR: Two weeks, I said that day I might end enough for me so I started working.

WC: I know you said you joined the Veterans. Did you join Veterans organizations?

AR: The American Legion, that's the only one I joined.

WC: Are you active at all in it? Do you still belong to it?

AR: I still belong to it but I don't participate in anything.

WC: Do you ever stay in connect with anyone that was in the service with you?

AR: No. Well there's few people here left in town that I see once in a while. Roger [unclear] but he was only with us for a year and I don't know where he wind up in Hawaii somewhere but I don't know where about. He had married a girl over there and she died there about a month or so ago. She was from Hawaii.

WC: How do you think your time in the service had affected on your life?

AR: Well I just went along for experience. I don't think it affected me because I got out when I was twenty five, well twenty three. I never figure I was living this long.

WC: Do wounds every bother you?

AR: Yes, I been trying to get some more money for [unclear] but they said that it's nothing but [unclear] right or whatever. It's not effective from the gun wound so I do get twenty percent ten percent from free slave but one doctor down in VA, I been going down there since eighty six he said I should of got more money for it right from the beginning but I tried to get some [unclear] couple months ago they rejected me.

WC: Do you have any pictures that you want to show us?

AR: There's some in here.

MR: Do you want to hold it up?

AR: [Shows picture]

WC: When and where was that taken do you remember?

AR: Nineteen Forty, that was fall of Nineteen Forty because we got the [unclear] uniform on. The rest of the time we were in heat so we didn't need them.

WC: Do you have any other pictures that you want to show us?

AR: [Shows picture]

MR: Okay, where was that taken?

AR: Probably in Hawaii someplace. Got khakis uniform on. [Shows picture] These here are Joe [unclear], John [unclear], Monty [unclear]. They were all from California, Saint Barbara or somewhere from there. I got fight with this guy and another guy same time in Okinawa.

WC: What were you fighting about?

AR: Just getting arguments, but I wasn't afraid of too many people.

AR: There's a good snap shot. [All laughed] I think that's about it in the picture. They even got a break down on M1, old tree, and King [unclear] of Hawaii. There were Japanese up in the trees and [unclear] tank company attached to us him and his crew got all killed he made Lieutenant in the fields Bill Freeman, but the Japanese threw a grenade over the wall us talking on Okinawa over there and got killed. They all got killed, the whole four of them there in a tank gun. There one Japanese sniper was up in a tree and [unclear] took the top of the tree right off and the Japanese with it.

WC: Have a story?

AR: Huh?

WC: I thought you were going to have another story to tell.

AR: No.

WC: Well, thank you very much for your interview.