

Basic Detail Report

Title Interview with Mitchell Arron

Date 10 March 2020

Primary Maker Mitchell Arron

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Description Oral history interview with Mitchell Arron and his wife, Vivian (Marks)

Arron, interviewed by Molly Woods, CHS Registrar, and Julia Morrow, CHS

Collections Assistant, for the Connecticut Historical Society. Interviewed 10

March 2020 at Mr. Arron's house in Trumbull, Connecticut. Interview discusses

Mr. Arron's Korean War service. Transcription by Julia Morrow, March 2020

Original Media: Digital Audio Duration: 15 min. 42 sec. Names: Mitchell Arron

Vivian Arron Max Arron Anna Arron Stanley Arron Molly Woods Julia Morrow

Topics: Korean War, 1950-1953 United States Armed Forces United States Army

United States Army Corps of Engineers United States Garrison Hohenfels

Veterans of Foreign Wars Jewish War Veterans Hohenfels, Germany Bridgeport,

Connecticut Molly Woods: My name is Molly Woods I am the Registrar at the

Connecticut Historical Society, I'm joined by Julia Morrow, Collections

Assistant at the CHS and today we are interviewing Mitchell Arron at his home in

Trumbull, Connecticut, and his wife, Vivian Arron, is also present, and we are

going to chat about his experience in the Korean War. If we just start with some

background information about you, where were you born? Mitchell Arron: Well, I

was born in Canada. MW: Oh, really? MA: But I was— Vivian Arron: Mitch

[Mitchell], Halifax, Nova Scotia. MA: Halifax, Nova Scotia. But I was drafted in

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19— VA: Then your parents came to Connecticut. MA: Right [laughing] VA: Go ahead. MA: Came to Connecticut, grew up here. And when the Korean War started in 1951, I think, I was drafted. What is there to say? I went through basic training, which was, well, you get guns and you take the guns apart, at night, so you can see them and what you do, at night. What else did we do, we looked for how to find minefields and the rest of the stuff. And then I was sent to a school in, I think it was Dayton, Ohio, but I’ m not sure. [To Vivian] Was it Dayton? VA: Don’ t ask me, I was probably not even born then. All: [laughter] MA: [speaking atop one another] Because it was in Engineering— VA: He was in the Engineering Corps, and so their symbol is on— MA: I think they came from New Orleans, drafted out of New Orleans, and then just filled it up with guys [from] all over. So, I went to that school to be a parts supply man, and then after that, I thought I was going to go to Europe— VA: [correcting] No, to Korea. MA: I thought I was going to go to Korea, but instead we ended up in Europe. It was a place about two miles from the Czechoslovakian border and being an engineering company, we had to build a whole new facility. You’ d wake up in the morning and see 10 tanks out there, and the next day they’ re gone, they’ d build up a supply depot. VA: And the name of the town in Germany? MA: Hohenfels, H-O-E-N-F-E-L-S. It was near the Czechoslovakian border, but the Officers used to say, “Don’ t be afraid of the five or 10,000 Russian tanks a couple of miles away, because we have the Atomic Bomb and they don’ t. VA: When you were there didn’ t you— is that where you used to dig and see if there were live mines? MA: Some guys looked for minefields, some guys put up telephone poles, and other guys made

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foundations for buildings and made outhouses. That's the story. VA: Weren't you one of the ones that looked to see if there are any live minefields? MA: Well, a little, but I didn't come across anything thank God. [laughs] VA: [laughing] Thank God. MW: What did that entail? What did you look for when you were looking for mines? MA: You get down on your hands and knees, and you have a bayonet and you prod down [mimes action and those present react], I guess it was looking for anti-tank mines, so, nope, no, none of our guys got blown up or anything. MW: Oh, that's good! VA: He makes it [out] like it's nothing, but who wants to dig in the dirt with a bayonet looking for a live mine? And you became a Corporal? MA: Yeah, I was a Corporal, it was good, no more guard duty and no more KP [Kitchen Patrol]. All: [laughs]. MW: Great— MA: And then I came home, two years. MW: What kind of jobs did you have before you went into the war? MA: My father had a used clothing store, and we started selling uniforms to mailmen and policemen, and it worked up into a pretty big business. Julia Morrow: What part of Connecticut was that in? MA: Oh, downtown— VA: [Speaking at the same time] In Bridgeport. JM: [Clarifying] In Bridgeport? VA: In Bridgeport, yes, downtown. MA: I sold the business about 22 years ago, and the guy I sold it to made enough money to retire in 20 years. Now I'm still working for the guy that bought it from him. VA: My husband still works, he has his customers, his postal uniform customers in New Haven, West Haven, Westville, and North Haven. He goes there and he loves to work, he loves the job. MA: I don't go towards Greenwich [Connecticut], or Stamford [Connecticut], because traffic in the morning is so bad. MW: When you got back did you go back to doing the same

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thing? MA: Yes, [jokingly] very unexciting. VA: You went to UB [University of

Bridgeport], didn't you? MA: Yes, for a couple years. VA: For two years for

Engineering, you were hoping to be an Engineer. But then when he came home

his father needed him, so he went into the business, and he really helped build

up the business to become a uniform [store]. Not used clothing anymore, so

much, but more in the uniforms: Policemen, Guards, he expanded the business.

MW: Great, what were your parent's names? MA: Max Arron and Anna Arron.

MW: Okay, and do you have any siblings? MA: A brother and a sister— VA: They'

re deceased. MA: They're both dead. MW: Did either of them serve in the

military at all? MA: No— My brother was, yes. VA: Stanley [Arron]. MA: He was

[thinking], VA: Was he in the Air Force? MA: He was in the Air Force, higher than

the Sargent, but below Assistant Lieutenant. He never told me what he did, but I

think he helped train guys to be bombardiers. MW: Let's see, you were part of

the Army, the Engineering Corps, what was your first assignment after basic

training? [Cell phone rings, VA leaves interview and can be heard taking the call

in the background] MA: I guess I worked in the motor pool, supplying parts for

the building crew. MW: Okay— MA: [Jokingly] I know, so boring. MW: Did you

receive any specialized training for anything? MA: Just the schooling. MW: Did

you work with any equipment such as vehicles, radios, weapons? MA: No, just

supplying parts for the different bulldozers and cranes, and stuff like that. MW:

What was it like living there [Hohenfels, Germany] during the time? MA: I forget

[laughs], because we jumped out of the trucks when we first got there, and it

was a muddy field, and when I left it was a semi-livable place. MW: What was

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your living situation like there? MA: It was good, we had good cooks, we were near Munich [Germany], so we'd go to Munich, went to Austria, and London [United Kingdom]. I was lucky. MW: Did you meet a lot of people that you became friends with there that you stayed in touch with? MA: Soldiers, I lost contact with all of them. MW: Okay. MA: They all lived in [trails off] [VA audible on the phone in the background] MA: Sorry I can't be more help. MW: Oh, no! Anything is better than nothing, we weren't there. While you were there did you stay in touch with your family and friends? MA: Oh, yeah. MW: By letters? MA: Yeah, just letters, because we were basically safe. Nobody was going to fool around with us because we had enough fire [power], you know, enough tanks around, atomic bombs, the Russians would leave us alone. JM: Did you get any special care packages, or was it mostly letters? MA: No, I don't think so. I can't [remember], you know, what is it 60 years ago? I forgot. MW: What kind of things did you do when you weren't working, did you have a lot of time off? MA: I think we worked about 6 or 7 days a week. MW: What would you say was the best part of your service? MA: I can tell you the worst part was coming in the boat over there and going in the boat back home. Half the guys were throwing up. MW: How long did it take? MA: It must have taken about a week I don't even know. They were Kaiser's boats, what were they called? MW: Oh, I'm not sure. MA: They weren't really like a Queen Mary or anything, they were just steamers. MW: Okay, and how long were you there for? MA: About a year. MW: How did your service end? Did you have a term limit, did something trigger that ending? MA: No, it just came up, my two years were up, and you go home. MW: Great,

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what was it like adjusting to civilian life when you got back? MA: It was fine

because I went into the same business. VA: [Returns to interview] Excuse me, we

had a picture, I don't know if it's still there or if the boys took it, but a picture

of my husband in his uniform. [Leaves interview to look for the picture] MA: I was

a tall skinny kid. All: [laugh] MW: Did you join any Veteran's organizations? MA:

Yes, I think so, I think I did, I can't remember, VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars]

maybe, Jewish War Veterans, something like that. MW: What would you say

some of the life lessons you learned from your military experience if any? MA:

Just be thankful I didn't go to Korea— That was a terrible war. JM: Did you have

any friends or relatives that had that other path? MA: No, I had met guys. One of

my friends was sent across to be a [thinks] what do you call those guys that go

out and bring back guys that are wounded? JM: Stretcher-bearer or Medical

Corps? MA: Medical Corps, right, things like that. Another one was in the infantry

in Korea. It was just a matter of luck, when they need guys, when you're

drafted wherever they need somebody, you're the one that goes there. These

were all southern boys; they'd have southern music. JM: Did they turn you onto

any kind of music you hadn't heard before? MA: No. MW: Would you say that

your military experience impacted your feelings about war or the military in

general? MA: You know when you're young, you don't care where you go, you

think you're bullet-proof, or something— It's because all the guys we were

drafted with, they went, had to go fight. That's it. MW: Okay, great! MA: Those

uniforms will be of use to you? [MA donated his military uniforms to the CHS]

MW: Yes, we only have one other set of Korean War uniforms, which we just

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happened to take in last month, so, it is good timing! Was there anything else

you wanted to share about your experience? MA: Not really. VA: [Enters room]

When do you think that you' re going to have this display? We' ve been

packing and I didn' t even think of it [the picture of MA]. If I find it, I can perhaps

take a picture of it and get your email address and email it to you. I can' t even

remember what box or anything that we packed, I was looking in the file cabinet

to see if they were there, but they' re not. It' s too bad because it was a good

picture. MW: I' m not sure when they' ll go on exhibit, it could take whatever

time— VA: It could be around a month? MW: Yes, or longer. VA: When I come

across it I will try to reach you and do that. MW: Yes, that would be great. VA:

When you' re through with my husband, for this aspect of it— because I know

this little outfit is 100 years old, so shall we take a look? MW: Yes, I think we' re

done with the interview portion, thank you. [End]

Dimensions Duration: 15 Minutes, 42 Seconds