



## **Irving M. Abramson**

**U.S. Army—World War II  
Europe  
397th Infantry, ERC — Co. L  
100th Division  
Private First Class**

## **Irving M. Abramson**

**Veterans  
History  
Project  
Transcript**

**Interview conducted  
March 12, 2008**

**Niles Public Library  
Niles Public Library District  
Niles, Illinois**



Niles Public Library District  
Veterans History Project Transcript

Veteran: **Irving M. Abramson**

Rank: **Private First Class**

Branch of Service: **U.S. Army**

Theater: **World War II – Europe**

**Unit: 397<sup>th</sup> Infantry, ERC- Co. L, 100<sup>th</sup> (“Century”) Division**

Interview Date: 3/12/2008, 2-3:30 p.m.

Place: Large Meeting Room B

Equipment: Philips Digital Pocket Memo Recorder

Interviewer: Neil O’Shea

*This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted on Wednesday, March the 12<sup>th</sup>, here at the Niles Public Library in the year 2008. And Mr. Abramson and I are sitting here in the auditorium of the Niles Public Library. My name is Neil O’Shea and I’m a member of the reference staff here. And I’m speaking with Irving M. Abramson. Mr. Abramson was born on January the 10th, 1926, and he now lives in Skokie, Illinois. Mr. Abramson has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. He also has prepared for this interview by bringing some typed-out recollections of some aspects of his time in the service in World War II in the U.S. Army in Europe. So here is his memoir of service.*

*Mr. Abramson, when did you enter the Service?*

In August of 1943, I enlisted at the age of seventeen.

*Had you completed high school at that time or--*

I had completed high school and had started college. I was going to Illinois Institute of Technology at that time.

*Were you on a science, or technical, or an engineering--*

I was an engineering student. Mechanical engineering was my major.

*And you chose to enlist rather than wait to be drafted, is that--*

Well, what had happened was that the Army came into many of the colleges and gave an aptitude test, I think, it was especially to the engineering students. And if you, if the student scored high enough in that test, the Army offered to send that person to college at the government expense until graduating. And then that person would be come out of college as a second lieutenant in the Army. And the only thing that the Army wanted was a promise for the student or soldier to stay in the Service for three years. In that the tuition was very high at that time, although probably negligible compared to today, it

sounded very appealing. I spoke to my parents about it. And they were, of course, dead set against their seventeen-year-old joining the Army, enlisting, but, after three days of argument, they finally consented. And I indeed enlisted in the Army Reserve, because I couldn't be in the Army until eighteen. And they did, at that time, follow their promise and sent me to the University of Wisconsin in Madison. And I continued my engineering education there for a short time. I believe it was for two terms. At the end of that, I had become eighteen, and, unfortunately, the Army had decided to disband that program. The program was called Army Specialized Training Program. And the war had become hot and heavy, and they decided they needed soldiers more than engineers, so they disbanded the program. I got notice to discontinue my student time at U.W. and report to Fort Sheridan in Illinois for induction into the Army.

*And were you-- you must have had probably mixed feelings at that time, or did you?*

I was very disappointed in that the Army did not follow up with their promise. And I think all of us, there was a large number of us that were in the same program. And we all felt very cheated at the time, because we very well might have continued our college education where we were and possibly gotten a deferment for being in an engineering school, which many of the engineering students had at that time. It was questionable, and I didn't worry about it too much. I wasn't really thrilled about being ushered into the Infantry.

*I'm sure your parents weren't, either.*

No. No. No. No. They, of course, hated to say I told you so.

*Yes, I bet. And, at that time, your family lived in Chicago?*

They, at that time, were in Chicago. My father was in business in Albany Park at that moment, so that's where I went to the Army from.

*And you had attended Lane Technical High School?*

Yes, early. I had gone all four years of my high school education at Lane Tech - very wonderful school at that time.

*So you come down to Fort Sheridan, then?*

Right.

*So then you had to have a basic training experience, then?*

Right.

*And where did that take place?*

I was sent at that time to North Carolina. It was a basic training camp in North Carolina. And I spent my initial military training there. Right after that, we were given a pass to go home and wait for further assignment. I shortly, thereafter, received an assignment to join the 100th Infantry Division, which was also based in Georgia. And I trained with them for a short period and then from there we went to Europe.

*Was-- was that, your training camp experience in North Carolina, was that the first time you'd been-- of course, you'd been away at University of Wisconsin in Madison, so that wasn't your first time away from home?*

Right. Well, the trip to Wisconsin was the first time, really, away from home.

*And then was it an interesting experience being in a camp away from home with people from all over the country and all different backgrounds*

Oh, yes.

*I imagine it was a real insight into what America was becoming.*

Really. Really. It was not only a melting pot of nations, but a melting pot of different parts of the country. And meeting people from Appalachia and all over the United States was an interesting experience.

*So then you were assigned to the, did you mention the 100--*

Yes. The 100th Infantry Division was known as the Century Division.

*And then you set sail for Europe then from a particular--*

From our camp in Georgia, we were sent to New York where most of the troops were being sent to Europe, and that's where we debarked from. We left from the ports in New York and zigzagged across the Atlantic to Europe.

*So you were in this tech training path, as it were, and then the Army discontinued this engineering preparation programming or whatever?*

Yes.

*And then when they placed you in the Army, what your aptitudes were or your academic training were had no bearing on where they placed you in the--*

Unfortunately.

*Army, you were Regular Infantry, is that right?*

That is correct. Unfortunately, nothing in my past experience meant anything. I had been an excellent photographer, and that had been my hobby for some years. And I tried to tell them about that, because they needed photographers. And I talked about my engineering training. But nothing mattered. They needed infantry, and that was the bottom line.

*So when you zigzagged to avoid German submarines, I suppose--*

That was the story, yes.

*You were in a convoy, I suppose?*

Right.

*Did you land in Scotland or--*

No. No. We zigzagged across the Atlantic and landed finally in Marseilles, France.

*Oh, yes.*

And that was a big port. We, the Americans, had already made their initial landing in France and had already gotten a pretty good foothold by the time we arrived. And so we arrived in Marseilles and started our march through France and Germany from there.

*And was that difficult going?*

Well, by then, we had pretty well been hardened by our military training and knew what to expect in terms of effort required. The sounds, the first sounds, of exploding artillery and gunfire when we got near the front were a bit shocking and, very frankly, scary. So we were introduced to that within a short time after landing.

*And that was still in France?*

That was, yes. We were in the eastern part of France just before going into Germany.

*And how was Army food at that time? Did you feel like you were well looked after in the field or--*

No. All during basic training and training with the Century Division, we were treated to Army Camp food. And it was strictly institutional food preparation. But, at that time, we were working very hard and training very hard and any moment to relax and have a meal was not a time to complain about anything that was served us. Once in Europe, we were given rations, and each of us carried rations. There were a couple different kinds. There were C rations and K rations. The C rations were prepared can foods which could be heated over a Bunsen burner or any kind of heat that you could get going. And the K rations were dried food that came in a box similar to a Cracker Jack box. And it contained

crackers, cheese, a chocolate bar, stuff of that nature. The canned stuff was corned beef hash, and stew, and that type of food.

*Was it either one or the other or--*

No. We were equipped with both.

*So you put them both together, you had a pretty good meal?*

You could do that, but we usually didn't do that. We didn't eat too much at any one time. And we would either choose one or the other at any one moment when we decided to stop and partake of some food.

*And were you able to write home to your parents*

During--

*and family*

Yes.

*at this time?*

During the period of training, especially back in the U.S., much of the contact was having V mails with the family and friends. Once in Europe, it became a little more difficult for the mail to get to us, especially once we had gone into the battlefield and up at the front lines. Every once in a while, I would say possibly every few weeks, we would stop at a rest area, and mail would catch up to us, but it was not too often.

*I'm guessing that as you work your way north, the 100th division from Marseilles up to East-Central France and closer to Germany, I imagine that it's getting hotter.*

Hotter by virtue of the action?

*Yes. Yes.*

Very much so. Temperature-wise, it was quite cold. And we were there during the winter, and it was cold, and many a night was spent in a foxhole with rain coming down. And I, at one point, was in a foxhole for about eight or ten hours with freezing water up to my ankles. And in the morning, when we decided, when our commanders decided, to move out, I couldn't move. I couldn't walk. And they took me back to a rest and recuperation area where I stayed for about 48 hours. And, fortunately, I did not have frostbite. But close to it. And so the weather was very cold, and it snowed, and, so, we were subject to that kind of thing.

*This is November, December?*

Right.

*1944?*

Correct. Correct.

*And then all the time you are getting closer to the, I'm imagining, to the Battle of the Bulge Area?*

That is right.

*That you mentioned on your form.*

That is correct. As we approached Germany, we were pushing the Germans back, of course, into their own land, and the action became quite heavy. And we were subject to a tremendous amount of artillery attacks more than anything. We did have a number of front-line rifle skirmishes with German troops. And that was always scary and dangerous. But the big danger was from the artillery. The Germans were very adept at their artillery attacks. They had artillery equipment that they could zoom in. And the soldiers would say they could put a shell in your hip pocket if they wanted to. And, of course, as I say, the artillery attacks became more numerous as we approached Germany.

Finally, in the end, that's where I was wounded on December 11th, 1944. We were in the Black Forest. And we had dug in into foxholes and the shells began to fly. And the bombardment lasted it seemed like for hours, but I'm sure it probably wasn't more than 30 or 45 minutes. But, during that time, shells came, were exploding all around us. I was in a foxhole. We had just begun to dig in. The foxhole that I was in with two of my buddies was only about a foot deep. When the shells began flying, and we could no longer stand up or kneel down and dig, we just lied down flat in this one foot deep foxhole. There was a soldier on either side of me. I was in the middle. And we just lied there while the shells exploded all around us. Of course, the rest of my outfit was spread around the area as well. At dusk, the shells started about dusk. And, in the morning, all I remember is waking up to daylight. And there were aid men, first aid men, standing above me and helping me up. And I found out later that the two other soldiers, one on each side of me, were killed. It was quite shocking.

*So did you recall when exactly you were hit?*

No, I do not. I do not recall it.

*You were lying on the ground with--*

Right.

*And then through the night and then--*

Through the night.

*And then morning came and--*

As a matter of fact, during the night, I had already been wounded unbeknownst to myself. And I could not understand later on why I did not feel pain. And the doctors explained that your body is traumatized and, I guess, going into shock. You just don't feel the pain. There are other things involved, some physiological thing that I will not ever understand. But at any rate--

*So you were hit in the back? In the back?*

No, the shell that got me, and I think I was lying on my right side with my left side exposed, and somebody said, later on, that the shell might have hit a tree and the shrapnel bounced off the tree and hit my left side, my entire left side had been torn up by fragments, artillery fragments. My left leg was broken. Both bones of my lower left leg and tibia were broken in half. My chest was punctured. I have a, today, I have a six-inch scar in my chest where shells, where part of a shell, entered, punctured my chest and punctured my lung. How I ever survived all of this, I don't know. It was a miracle.

*Miraculous. Do you think it was the-- I don't know if this is an appropriate question. Do you think that the same shell that so injured you also was responsible for taking the lives of the two soldiers?*

Very likely. Very likely. It was hard to tell, because there were so many shells landing at that time, but certainly--

*Were you taken back to a hospital or medical area?*

Yes. Many people are familiar with the program M\*A\*S\*H. This was a First Aid hospital right behind the lines of any battlefield. And the program well describes what these hospitals were like. And they were, the purpose was to immediately save the soldier's life rather than try to heal up the wounds, necessarily. And I was taken back to a MASH hospital.

I was unconscious for three days. Whether it was the drugs, or the shock, or what it was, I don't know. But I woke up three days later. And there were nurses around. And I was still in a haze. They had given me a considerable amount of morphine to counteract the pain, so I wasn't entirely with it. But slow but sure, my head began to clear. And I was aware that the Army, with all injured soldiers, immediately sent notification to the family by way of a Western Union telegram. The first thing that hit me was if my parents saw that telegram, they would be frightened to death, and I had to try to contact them prior to that telegram. I didn't know how fast the telegram went out. I was encased in a cast from my toes up to my waist. My chest was bandaged with pressure bandages. And I couldn't really move. I was flat on my back, so I couldn't, of course, write. My first thought was



to write my parents a letter saying that I was okay. One of the nurses came by. And I asked her if she would be kind enough to write this short letter that I dictated and send it back to my parents. She said she would be happy to, so I dictated a letter. And the letter went out. Unfortunately, it went out after they got the telegram. When they got the telegram, they were quite shocked. And because of all of these soldiers that were wounded and killed at the time, we lost 10,000 men in the Battle of the Bulge. There were quite a few of those telegrams that went out.

*Yes. You were kind enough to submit a copy here of that Western Union telegram, which we will include in your memoir. It informs your parents that you had been seriously wounded.*

Right.

*They must have been--*

Right. They were quite shocked.

Yes.

And more so, because they could not get additional information.

*Pardon me, , where you were wounded, was that near a particular town or, you say, Black Forest or--*

I am sure it was

*Were you moved to a hospital in a particular area at a particular town?*

Later on.

Yes.

I was moved back to Dijon.

*Dijon.*

France.

Which was quite a bit farther back from the front lines. I don't know a particular town that we were near or an area we were fighting to get into at the time I was wounded. They told me it was the Black Forest. And I just accepted that. I really didn't care.

*You really had a lot of, a lot to try and understand.*

Yes.

*Or make sense of.*

Yes.

*You were worried about your parents, and then you learn that your two buddies are--*

Right.

Yes.

*My goodness.*

Right. I was a bit traumatized. And I think we have to understand, as I think about it now, that I was nineteen years old. And as I look at my grandson who is just about that age, I think how did they send these babies to war? So that, it was true most of us that were there, we were all in that age group, eighteen to twenty, as are the soldiers today. So, it's very discouraging that this should happen to our youth. I think an interesting--I mentioned the letter that the nurse wrote. I think it was interesting to note that my parents did receive that some days later after the telegram. And while the letter I dictated said: "Don't worry, I was just scratched. And, fortunately, I'm going back to a rest area, and I won't have to face any more action," I'm trying to ease the burden of the telegram, but when they saw that, they knew it was not my handwriting, and they could not imagine why somebody else would be writing this. Did my hands get blown off? Was I blind? Was I-- and I didn't realize that until, much later, they told me about it. But that wasn't as smart an act as I thought it might be. They thought I was far worse off than I was. Not that I wasn't seriously wounded, but I certainly didn't lose any arms or legs, or was blinded.

*Was it sometime during this period that you experienced your "fifteen minutes of fame"?*

No, no. That was quite a bit later. From the MASH hospital, where they did life saving work, and the doctors and nurses that were there doing miraculous work with less than what they, the equipment they might have had in the hospital atmosphere. They used paper clips, staples, tape, anything to put the soldiers back together again. From there, once I was stabilized, I was sent back to a general hospital in Dijon, France. In Dijon, France, I went through four major surgeries where they corrected all of the things that were wrong with me at that moment. My leg was cast, reset and casted, and my chest was sewn up, and, for the most part, there was just a matter of healing after that period. I was there for; I'd say, probably a month or so, possibly a little longer.

From there, once I was well on the road to healing up, they sent me back to a hospital again in Marseilles, France. This was a hospital known as an R & R place, which was Rest and Relaxation, and it was a hospital that was set in a beautiful area. And I recall finding great peace and rest once I arrived there. I was there for several weeks, enjoying that rest and relaxation when I was told I would be going home again. And the process of

sending soldiers home from that point was to cart them back to Paris, France, via trains, and, in Paris, fly them back to the United States. And that's when I say I had my experience that I called fifteen minutes of fame.

And this is sort of the way it went. I was seventeen years old when I enlisted in the United States Army in October of 1943. I was eighteen years old in December of 1944, when I was seriously wounded during a German artillery attack in the infamous World War II Battle of the Bulge. I turned nineteen while in the Army hospital in France recovering from those wounds. And that's really where my story starts. In February of 1945, after being treated in three different medical facilities in France, I was sent to a convalescent hospital in Marseilles for R & R, rest and relaxation. Not only was my recovery incomplete, but my body was encased in a cast that went from my left foot with just my toes showing up to my belly button. It was not a pretty sight.

About noon on a beautiful, bright February 2nd day, I was given the news that every soldier prayed to hear. "Soldier, you're going home." It wasn't more than a few hours later that I was loaded on a stretcher and taken by ambulance to the local train depot. It was only then that I became aware that I was one of about forty or fifty other recovering wounded GIs that were about to be loaded on a hospital train and begin the trip home. Our train's destination was Paris, France, where we would all be transferred to an airplane for the trip back to the United States.

The railroad cars were former passenger cars that had been especially converted and outfitted to carry patients on stretchers. The cars were gutted of seats and rigged with long horizontal brackets mounted to the side wall of the cars to which the stretchers could be fastened. They were mounted three high with about 36 inches between them. I wound up in the middle position with a stretcher above me and one below. It was the furthest thing from deluxe travel as you could possibly get. However, none of us there had a complaint. We were going home. And it didn't matter how. The trip to Paris was an overnight journey. The train started rolling at about dusk. I can still hear the exceptionally loud clickety-clack of the wheels. I guess that the exaggerated sound was because of the extreme bareness of the reconverted railway cars.

I had drifted off to sleep and was awakened about ten p.m. by severe pain in my casted foot. The pain was so intense that I called for a medic, a first aid man, who was on duty in our car. When he checked my foot, he explained, with concern, that it had swollen up badly, and the pain was probably caused by the cast cutting into it. He told me he was going to get a tool to cut the cast and relieve the pressure.

But, first, he called to an assistant to stay with me until he returned. The assistant was a pleasant, smiling lady dressed in olive drab army fatigues. What I remember most was her sincere concern, sympathy, and kindness. Her voice was calming and comforting and took the edge off the pain. The first aid man returned shortly and proceeded to cut away the cast. And my discomfort was soon relieved. During the entire process, the lady angel held my hand and spoke soothingly about our return home. The medic asked me if I was okay. I assured him, and I thanked him very much. He said he would return later to

check on me. Then this lady angel asked me to reassure her that I was okay. And when I did, she leaned over and kissed me. Holy Smokes! She kissed me! In that instant it took for the shock to wear off, she was gone. I was devastated. I never got a chance to thank her. About a half hour later, the medic returned to check on me, and he said, as he said he would, once I assured him I was okay, he asked me, "You know who that lady was that held your hand?" I said I didn't and was disappointed that I didn't get a chance to thank her. "Soldier," he said, "that was Marlene Dietrich. She rides these trains regularly as a volunteer maiden of mercy. She prefers being anonymous and doesn't look for any thanks." Well, we arrived in Paris the next morning, later that day, we were loaded on an airplane and flew back to the US. I never saw Miss Dietrich after that one special night. I can tell you that my experience during World War II could fill a small book. But the one of the most outstanding and memorable was my fifteen minutes of fame when Marlene Dietrich kissed me.

*Thank you. Thank you.*

*So you're basically-- you basically were a very healthy young man. I mean you--*

To begin with, yes.

*To recover from that degree of harm suffered by your body and then-- but the Army decided you were not going to go back to the front. You were going to go back home.*

Oh, yes. Yes, I was too seriously injured. I couldn't walk or do anything at that point, so my days in battle were over.

*They were definitely over.*

Right.

*Because of the injuries?*

Right.

*So you land back from Paris. You were flying back to the United States.*

Right. We landed in New York, and they loaded us into a waiting area, and, while in that waiting area, they interviewed us as to where our homes were. And with the prospect of bringing us back to a hospital near our homes where we would continue our recovery and where it would be easier for families to visit us, I, of course, told them that I was from Chicago. And I knew there were some good hospitals in and around Chicago. And they said, "Sure. We will be happy to see what we can do." Later that day, things moved very fast. I was really quite surprised. Later that day, I was loaded onto a train for a trip back to where I thought I was going. But I didn't ask any questions. The next day, when the train arrived at its destination, I found that I was in Topeka, Kansas.

*Oh.*

So, they, whoever I spoke to who interviewed me, either didn't hear well or didn't know his geography very well. So, I was quite disappointed. But when you are in the Army, it doesn't pay to complain, so--.

*That was another train trip back then, was it?*

No, no, that's where it was. I was brought into the Winter General Hospital in Topeka, Kansas, which happened to be on the same location with the Menninger Clinic. The Menninger Clinic was a psychological hospital. And when I heard that, I thought to myself, oh, my God, am I nuts? Is that why I wound up here? But it turned out that Dr. Menninger had donated half of his facility to the Army for recovering GIs. And it had nothing to do with psychological problems. But that's where I spent the balance of my recovery. And the staff there was good. The doctors were good. And I had no real complaint other than it was practically impossible for my family to visit, except for one member of the family, an uncle, who represented the family and came out to see me.

*Excuse me. When you landed in New York, were you able to make a telephone call?*

Yes. Yes.

*To your family?*

Yes. I did. Indeed, yes, I did.

*Boy, that must have been great news for your mother!*

Oh, yes, yes. Yes, the family cried pretty good at that point. All the soldiers as well. We were in a big room the size of a gymnasium. And it was almost comical or pitiful to see all the soldiers crying at having come home.

*So you were down there in Topeka, Kansas. Is that-- you were there until October of 1945 then or--*

That is correct. I arrived there the middle of March and spent the balance of the year until October at Winter General in Topeka. And they had to do some minor repairs as I, during the healing process, and, but I spent my last days of the Army recovering there and got my honorable medical discharge from there.

*You also received a Purple Heart and Bronze Star.*

Yes. Yes, I did that, and that was rewarded back in, actually, in Dijon, France. During my stay there, it was not unusual for officers to come through the wards and speak to all of the men. And, occasionally, there was a ceremony where soldiers were awarded medals.

And, at one point during one of the ceremonies, I was awarded the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star.

*So you were down in Topeka when Germany surrenders?*

Right.

*And you were also there when Japan surrenders?*

Yes. I can't recall.

*Were there-- were there any celebrations?*

Oh, yes. Yes. Yes, there was always something going on, partying. And we were all happy to be alive and in one piece. And it was better days.

*Were there people, entertainers, or dignitaries, visiting the hospital?*

Very often. Very often. I don't recall having been party to any of the entertainment like the Bob Hope business while I was in Europe. But once back in the United States in the hospital, we had a number of people come by. I particularly remember Kathryn Grayson. Of course, when I mention all of these names now, nobody knows who they are. But Kathryn Grayson was a quite popular actress and singer. And there was a number of people. Barney Ross, the boxer, he came by. So we saw a number of dignitaries and stars that came to visit the hospitals.

*The-- so, then, you're discharged. And then was it a train ride at that point back to-- back to Chicago?*

Yes. During the period that I was in Topeka, at one point, I graduated to crutches. My leg was still in a cast, and, during the period, I received a pass to visit home and went home on crutches. And that trip was made on a train and back again to the hospital, of course, and, once discharged, we also received tickets to return to our home. And that was done on a train.

*So you were back in Chicago then?*

Right back home in Chicago.

*So is there still-- does your rehabilitation kind of have to continue for a while after that or were you pretty much able to move around the city on your own?*

No. I was pretty well healed up by that time. I must say that the work done by the Army hospitals and Army nurses and physicians was more than adequate. And I have no complaint like I've heard in recent days about wounded soldier care. We were taken care of very well. And I bless the doctors and nurses who put me together and who were

responsible for my recovery. They were very, very excellent. And my recovery was quite complete by the time that I was discharged. It was a matter of maybe learning to walk without a limp or something to that effect, but I was totally healed up.

*To a complete layperson sitting here, in the most ignorant sense of that word, I mean, it's amazing! That's within the year.*

Right.

*From December, you suffer all those horrendous injuries and then less than a year later, you're able to-- you've recovered.*

Right.

*To some degree. Amazing. Amazing.*

I guess I was pretty well healed up. The funny part about that particular subject is they could not remove all of the tiny shell fragments that had entered my body and particularly in my leg. I had some shell fragments that were lying against a muscle and ligaments. And they were afraid, that if they went to remove them, they might injure more than they could repair. So those shrapnel pieces were not really causing me any difficulty at the time I was discharged, but, later on, within, I think, a year, the fragments began to move. And one of them, actually, my skin opened up, and it popped out, and, after that, I had some pain. And I had a very good private doctor at home, and I went to him. They x-rayed my leg. They said, "Yes, you still have a shell fragment in there and why don't you go back to the V.A. and remove it?" And I said, "You know, I'm here. Why don't you do it?" And I was operated on here at the-- I'm trying to remember. I believe it was the Weiss Hospital on the outer drive and Wilson. And they removed more shrapnel from my leg at that time. And I was okay. I still-- I didn't totally eliminate a limp, and I, also, my breathing is affected. I don't have the lung power that I once had. So, I was left with some scars and not only psychological, but physical and things that affected my later life, but not that it stopped me from getting a job, getting married, and going on with life from there.

*So that-- was that your improving physical condition and then this worry or this sensation of these alien fragments in the body, I mean, that's a mighty psychological factor when you come back into civilian life?*

It is, except for one thing, when you're young, you're invincible.

*Other vets have said that, yes.*

*So, did you-- were you able to resume school or--*

Yes. At that time, the Army had a program called the G.I. Bill, and that bill entitled returning veterans to go back to school at the government's expense. And I took

advantage of that, and returned to college, and did attend college, a couple of different colleges, because I changed my major.

*You didn't go back to I. I.T. or--*

No. I had decided that, I don't know why, there were a number of reasons. I think I had a bad taste in my mouth because of the engineering experience.

And I had a cousin of mine who was a very successful dentist. And I decided, I saw him making a lot of money, and I decided that was the way to go. So, I enrolled at the Loyola Dental College, the north campus of Loyola, and started my training as a pre-dent. But, in my second term, they asked me to dissect a frog. And when they handed me the poor dead frog to dissect, I said I cannot do this. And I decided that the medical world was not my place.

So, I switched to a course, a major in business, transferred to Loyola campus, downtown, and attended Loyola for a while. I attended the Loyola downtown campus as a business major for a while. And friends of mine had enrolled in Roosevelt College which just received their charter in downtown Chicago. And they asked me to join them at Roosevelt. And I transferred and went to Roosevelt College for a while, still with my business major.

During that period, I met the young lady who became eventually became my wife and, once married, I had lost my taste for education, wanted to get back into the work world and earn some money, and start my life as a married and family man. So, my children, to this day, kid me about having attended five different colleges and never getting a degree!

*They probably made up for it, though, I have a feeling.*

Yes. Yes.

*Yes. Did you stay in contact with anybody, any your wartime buddies, after the Service or--*

There was a couple that I kept in touch with for a while. One of the gentleman that was a soldier, I didn't have any contact with any of the people that I fought in Europe with, as I say, 90 percent of the outfit I was with were wiped out, and I never, I lost complete touch with anybody in that 100th Century Division.

*Was that all during the period when you were injured?*

Right.

*They suffered so many casualties.*

Right.



Yes.

When I got back to Topeka and was in the hospital there, I made some friends. One of them was a gentleman by the name of Forman who was one of the sons of a big dealership, car dealership, in Chicago, Forman Motors, who later made news by being shot by a robber at the place of business. But he and I were buddies. And I recall, at the hospital, he, when he befriended me, he said when I got out of the Service, "You come and see us. I've got a job for you in our dealership." That never happened, of course, but we did-- we were close friends at that time. I did have contact with him after I was discharged, and we had lunch a number of times. I had other things that I wanted to do, so I didn't take up his offer for a job. But, other than that, I have not had any contact with military personnel that I had come in contact with ever.

*Did you join any veteran's organizations?*

I belonged to Veterans of Foreign Wars for a short time. I do not, at this time, belong to any, but I did a short time after I got out of Service. I was preoccupied with work, and family, and other things, and I didn't really have time for organizations.

*The young lady that you married, had she ever seen you in uniform?*

Never.

*She met you after?*

She met me afterwards. Except for pictures, she never saw me in uniform, no.

*As we enter the-- approach the last part of the interview, one of the questions that we always ask of our veterans is to reflect how do you think your service and experiences affected your life?*

To the extent that I hate war and hate the reports of young men being killed and find that it is a terrible disease of human beings that they fight one another. Beyond that, I can't say there was much other effect.

*I think that leads right into the second question, which you may have answered. Did your military experience influence your thinking about war or about the military in general?*

Oh, yes, definitely, definitely. I, of course, am proud of all of the young men that go to fight. But I am very sorry for them and sorry for their parents and families. I guess there's no way out of having armies and protecting one's country, but the idea that young men have to go to war and be killed, it really destroys me.

*Is there anything, as we reach the end of the interview, is there anything that you would like to add that we may not have covered in regard to--*

No. I think that this has been an excellent interview, and I really appreciate the time and effort that you do, Mr. O'Shea, and those of you those that work with you, and I think it was-- I feel honored that I was interviewed.

*You are very kind. Thank you. It's a beautiful interview. And there's a lot to be learned from listening to this interview, I'm sure.*

Thank you.

*And then you're also very generous with some of these documents and letters and pictures that relate to the interview today. And we'll add this to the transcript and sort of illustrate it in a way.*

Great.

*Okay. And I think we've reached the end of the interview.*

Thank you very much.

Nice meeting you.

*You too, sir.*

**Reader's Note:** At the time of his interview Mr. Abramson provided copies of the following, illustrative material:

- Army Specialized Training Reserve Program sheet
- Letter home from Camp Wheeler, GA
- Application For Ration Currency
- Last night on the town in New York before embarking for France
- Happy four-page letter from France
- Western Union telegram of his being "seriously wounded," received by parents
- Mr. Abramson's explanation of his first letter home after his wounding
- Letter home he dictated to nurse for writing
- Mrs. Abramson's response letter to her son
- Important Army cards of record
- Good Conduct Medal authorization, 10/23,1945
- Honorable Discharge Certificate
- Enlisted Record and Record of Separation
- World War II Honoree, WWII Memorial, print-out.

**Also appended are:**

Mr. Abramson's annotated chronology, "Military Service Record" and his moving memoir, entitled "My Fifteen Minutes of .....Fame??", followed by a related 2001 newspaper article.

Copy of General Order awarding Good Conduct medals to recovering veterans in the Army Hospital  
in Topeka, Kansas, on October 23, 1945.

ARMY SERVICE FORCES  
HEADQUARTERS WINTER GENERAL HOSPITAL  
TOPEKA, KANSAS

23 October 1945

GENERAL ORDERS:

NO 681

Under provisions of AR 600-68 dated 4 May 1943, and CI thereto, the GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL is awarded to the following enlisted men, Detachment of Patients, this general hospital:

T/Sgt	Miller, Meredith W	37606574
S/Sgt	Zajicek, Ralph A	16028983
Sgt	Oho, Toivo M	16071610
Sgt	Swickard, Ralph C	36010335
Cpl	Reno, John D	37301468
Pfc	Abramson, Irving M	
Pfc	Bell, Oscar F	35089710
Pfc	Coble, Raymond O	37752267
Pfc	Doucette, Bernard J	36895062
Pfc	Erickson, Elmer H	37773770
Pfc	Hammer, Edwin W	37435590
Pfc	Hauth, Carl E	36327090
Pfc	Kozub, Anthony, Jr	35843675
Pfc	Peters, Robert J	36876134
Pfc	Rice, William P	36732304
Pfc	Rothfolk, Norman D	37750322
Pfc	Teal, Joseph B	37640193
Pfc	Thelen, Waro D	37691937
Pvt	Gross, Earl H	36714568
Pvt	Warchel, Walter F	36700000

BY ORDER OF COLONEL GANIT:

EDWARD M. WONES  
Lt Colonel, PC  
Executive Officer

OFFICIAL:

*Omer G. Conrad*  
OMER G. CONRAD  
Captain, MAC  
Adjutant

R BOOK 271 PAGE 485



**Honorable Discharge**

*This is to certify that*

IRVING M. ABRAMSON

Private First Class, Company L, 397th Infantry

**Army of the United States**

*is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military service of the United States of America.*

*This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful Service to this country.*

*Given at*

Winter General Hospital, Topeka, Kansas

*Date*

October 1945

H. B. GANTT,  
Colonel, Medical Corps  
Commanding

Scan of photocopy of Mr. Abramson's  
"ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION"

**ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION**  
**BOOK 271 PAGE 486 HONORABLE DISCHARGE**

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL <b>ABRAMSON IRVING M</b>		2. ARMY SERIAL NO. [REDACTED]	3. GRADE <b>Pfc</b>	4. ARM OR SERVICE <b>Inf</b>	5. COMPONENT <b>ERC</b>
6. ORGANIZATION <b>Co L 397th Inf</b>		7. DATE OF SEPARATION <b>Oct 45</b>	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION <b>Winter GH Topeka Kansas</b>		
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES <b>[REDACTED] Lawrence Ave Cook Co Chicago Ill</b>			10. DATE OF BIRTH <b>10 Jan 26</b>	11. PLACE OF BIRTH <b>Chicago Illinois</b>	
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT <b>See #9</b>			13. COLOR EYES <b>Brown</b>	14. COLOR HAIR <b>Brown</b>	15. HEIGHT <b>5 4</b>
16. FACE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>X</b>		19. MARITAL STATUS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>X</b>	20. U.S. CITIZEN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>X</b>	21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. <b>Student College</b>	
17. NO. DEFEND <b>None</b>			18. WEIGHT <b>174 LBS.</b>		

**MILITARY HISTORY**

22. DATE OF INDUCTION [REDACTED]	23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT <b>Aug 43</b>	24. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE <b>13 Mar 44</b>	25. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>Chicago Illinois</b>
26. REGISTRATION DATA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>X</b>	27. LOCAL S.S. BOARD NO. [REDACTED]	28. COUNTY AND STATE [REDACTED]	29. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>See #9</b>
30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. <b>Rifleman 745</b>		31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (I.e., Infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) <b>Combat Inf Badge Ex Rifle M-1</b>	
32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS <b>Rhineland</b>			
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS <b>European African Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon with 1 Bronze Battle Star Purple Heart GO 4 Hq 36th GH 45 American Theater Ribbon</b>			
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION <b>Wounded in Action France 11 Dec 44</b>			
35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES		36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN	
SMALLPOX <b>Im</b>	TYPHOID <b>Jan 44</b>	TETANUS <b>May 44</b>	OTHER (specify) <b>Typhus Sep 44</b>
DATE OF DEPARTURE <b>Feb 44</b>	DATE OF DEPARTURE <b>11 Mar 45</b>	DESTINATION <b>ETO USA</b>	DATE OF ARRIVAL <b>20 Oct 44 12 Mar 45</b>
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE		38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD	
CONTINENTAL SERVICE YEARS MONTHS DAYS <b>1 2 6</b>	FOREIGN SERVICE YEARS MONTHS DAYS <b>0 5 7</b>	<b>Pfc</b>	
39. PRIOR SERVICE <b>None</b>			
40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION <b>Certificate of Disability for Discharge AR 615-361 Hq Winter Gen Hosp Topeka Kansas 25 Oct 45</b>			
41. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED <b>None</b>			42. EDUCATION (Years) Grammar <b>8</b> High School <b>4</b> College <b>2</b>

**PAY DATA**

43. LIABILITY FOR PAY PURPOSES YEARS MONTHS DAYS <b>2 2 10</b>	44. MUSTERING OUT PAY TOTAL \$ <b>300</b> THIS PAYMENT \$ <b>100</b>	45. SOLDIER DEPOSITS <b>None</b>	46. TRAVEL PAY \$ <b>25.65</b>	47. TOTAL AMOUNT, NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER <b>\$198.98 W. C. RATT Capt FD</b>
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**INSURANCE NOTICE**

48. KIND OF INSURANCE NAT. SERV. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>X</b> U.S. GOV. <input type="checkbox"/> <b>None</b>	49. HOW PAID Attachment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>X</b> Direct to V.A. <input type="checkbox"/>	50. Effective Date of Attachment Discontinuance <b>31 Aug 45</b>	51. Date of Next Premium Due (One month after 50) <b>Prem Waived</b>	52. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH <b>\$6.40</b>	53. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO Continue <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>X</b> Continue Only <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue <input type="checkbox"/>
---	---	---	---	---	--

54. <b>RIGHT THUMB PRINT</b>	55. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives) <b>Inactive Service in ERC: 16 Aug 43 - 12 Mar 44 Character: Excellent Lapel Button issued ASR Score (2 Sep 45) - 33</b>
	56. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <b>[Signature]</b>
57. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) <b>J. H. TAYLOR 1st Lt MAC Cof Mil Pers Br [Signature]</b>	

Scan of photocopy provided by Mr. Abramson, explaining his time in the  
ASTR Program, Army Specialized Training Reserve Program.

JUNE, 1943 : GRADUATED FROM LANE  
TECH HIGH SCHOOL

ENTERED & ATTEND ILLINOIS  
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
FOR ONE MONTH.

ENLISTED IN THE U.S. ARMY  
AND WAS SENT TO UNIV. OF  
WISC. IN THE "A.S.T.R." PROGRAM

CADET I. M. ABRAMSON

ASN: 16175317

ARMY SPECIALIZED TRAINING  
RESERVE PROGRAM

CO. AR, SECT. 6

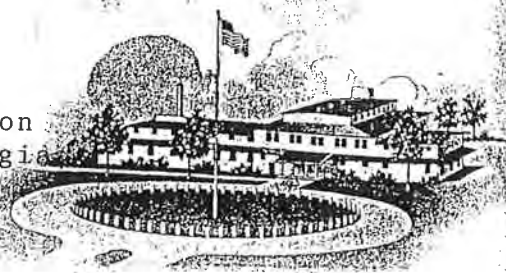
KRONSAGE HALL

MADISON

WISC.



Letter written by Mr. Abramson  
home from Camp Wheeler, Georgia  
with humorous reference to  
mosquitoes.



CAMP WHEELER  
GEORGIA

Thurs. note

Dear Folks,

It seems like months since I write you last. For a week and a half we've been out hiking and camping out and working tactical maneuvers. Tomite will be the first time I've slept in a bed for a week and believe me am I going to sleep. I think if you stretched the distance I've marched in the past week and a half in a straight line, the line would stretch from here to Chicago and back here again. My feet really feel it too — boy are they killing me. The heat and mosquitoes around here don't make things any more pleasant either and the size of the mosquitoes — wow. I heard two of them talking over my tent last night and one said to the other —  
"Say what do you say we carry this guy home with us — let's make a good feast." Then the other said, "Naw, if we took him home, the bigger mosquitoes would only take him away."

from u.s." I telling you —  
these pests are really gigantic.  
I'm really too tired to write  
a good letter tonite... I'll try to  
get a good one off over the  
week end I just wanted to  
write this note to tell you  
everythings O.K. and not to  
worry and that I'm fine So  
good nite for now

Love & regards to  
everyone

Love  
J.W.

Pvt. J.W. Abramson  
A.S.N. 1675317  
Co. B, 1st Plat, 11th Inf. Br.  
Camp Wheeler, Ga.



The Abramsons  
3827 W. Lawrence Ave  
Chicago 25, Ill



Copy of "Application For Ration Currency" issued to Mr. Abramson for his leave during December to visit home—good for ration currency allowing for 18 meals.

APPLICATION FOR RATION CURRENCY

FOR MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY WHEN ON LEAVE, FURLOUGH, OR PASS,  
OR WHEN AUTHORIZED TO BE ABSENT FROM STATION FOR ANY OTHER REASONS

3654 S.V. ASTRP  
Organization and station

December 4, 1943  
Date

Abramson, Irving Pvt. ASN  
Name Grade ASN

Applicant states that he intends to consume 18 meals at  
the home of Louis Abramson 3827 W. Lawrence Ave.  
Name Address

inclusive, and that he has no war ration book.

The Local War Price and Rationing Board having jurisdiction is  
requested to issue to bearer ration currency in conformity with the  
above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

Amason, Samuel Capt. Inf  
Signature, grade and organization  
of authenticating officer

Received by \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person receiving  
ration currency

Note: This application may be presented to a Local War Price and  
Rationing Board at any time during the period indicated hereon or within  
15 days thereafter by the applicant, his host, or member of the host's  
household.

OCT. 1944

*To Irving  
Here's hoping  
you return home  
real soon  
Blanche*

To Irving :  
Here's hoping you  
return home real soon  
Blanche

DEAR FOLKS:  
PICKED "SHORTY" UP AFTER I  
CALLED YOU FOLKS. WE WALKED DOWN  
BROADWAY, THRU TIMES SQUARE, AND  
JUST GLANCED AT RADIO CITY.  
THEN WE CAME HERE, DINED - DANCED  
AND SAW A GOOD SHOW. I REALLY  
HAD A SWELL TIME. WE LEFT HERE  
ABOUT 11:30 P.M. AND TOOK A LONG  
WALK AND AMONG OTHER THINGS,  
SAW A LITTLE MORE OF N.Y. CITY.  
IT GOT LATE AND I HAD TO CATCH  
A BUS FOR CAMP SO I DROPPED HER  
OFF AT THE SUBWAY - 'SAID' GOODNITE  
- AND CAUGHT MY BUS; WHICH BROUGHT  
TO AN END A PERFECT EVENING.

*J.W.G.*



Two nights before sailing for France and who knew what ???

Mr. Abramson wrote the four-page letter which begins below from France where he was having a "hell of a time" on Wednesday, November 23, 1944.

Day after Thanksgiving

Dear Folks;  
Believe it or not I'm sitting at a big desk (with my feet atop it) in a big chair smoking a cigar and writing this. Not only that but I just finished an enormous Thanksgiving feast and I'm full to the top. And ~~not~~ not only that but I got three packages just now - one from you, one from The Dan and one from Mrs. Rich (thank her for me). No kidding I'm having a hell of a time. I'll explain

R.

the big desk of soft chair (and big bed behind me in gamma sleep in tonight). I'll be in and around the front lately - kidding around you know, and I've been in on the liberation of a couple of the towns you've been reading about in the papers lately. Well I've been blessed by a million Frenchmen (I mean women) like in the newspapers and have more than tasted some delicious wine. Yesterday

day we were housed in  
a swell home (where I  
am now) and so I've  
spent a couple of comfortable  
days over Thanksgiving.

O.K. Yes, I got about 5  
letters from you all  
today also. I can't rem-  
ember all of your ques-  
tions but I'll tell you  
that I'm swell, don't  
need a thing and if  
the war keeps going as  
well as I hear it's been  
going, I'll be seeing you  
in not so very long a  
time. A bunch of the  
fellows come in the

room and started to  
go to work on the  
pages I don't mind  
though - there's so much  
there.

I've got some swell sou-  
venirs to hang up in  
the front room to remind  
me how much to  
appreciate home when  
I get back.

Until next time,

Love,  
JW,

CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

# WESTERN UNION

1201

SYMBOLS

DL = Day Letter
NL = Night Letter
LC = Deferred Cable
NLT = Cable Night Letter
Shin Radiogram

A. N. WILLIAMS  
PRESIDENT

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination  
#17 - 54 GOVT WUX WASHINGTON D C 12/22/44 11:01 AM

LOUIS ABRAMSON  
3827 W. LAWRENCE AVE CHGO

REGRET TO INFORM YOU YOUR SON WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED IN ACTION IN FRANCE ELEVEN DECEMBER UNTIL NEW ADDRESS IS RECEIVED ADDRESS MAIL FOR HIM QUOTE PRIVATE IRVING M. ABRAMSON SERIAL NUMBER (HOSPITALIZED) CENTRAL POSTAL DIRECTORY A P O 640 C/O POSTMASTER NEW YORK NEW YORK UNQUOTE YOU WILL BE ADVISED AS REPORTS OF CONDITION ARE RECEIVED DUNLOP ACTING THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

## ARMY REPORTS 2,722 SOLDIERS HURT IN ACTION

130 from Chicago and Its Vicinity on List.

(Chicago Tribune Press Service.)  
Washington, D. C., Feb. 1.—The war department today made public the names of 2,722 additional United States soldiers wounded in action. The list includes 130 men from Chicago and vicinity.

The majority of the casualties reported today occurred in the European area. Those in the Pacific ocean area are designated P, those in the Mediterranean, M.

Next of kin have been notified of any changes that may have occurred in the status of casualties since this list was compiled, the war department reports.

The relationship shown in the list is that of the casualty to the person whose name follows as next of kin.

CHICAGO AND VICINITY

Abramson, Pvt. Irving M., son—Louis Abramson, 3827 W. Lawrence av.  
Anzelmo, Pvt. 1st Class Sam F., husband—Mrs. Gertrude K. Anzelmo, 7212 W. 58th st., Summit.  
Banks, Pvt. John, husband—Mrs. Leona Banks, 325 E. 45th st., Albany.



PVT. IRVING ABRAMSON

PVT. ABRAMSON  
WINS 'HEART'

UP Newservice. Chicago April 15  
Irv Abramson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Abramson, 3827 Lawrence Ave., recently received the Purple Heart for wounds suffered Dec. 11 in France. A graduate of Lane Technical high school, Irv attended the Armour Institute before entering the service 1 1/2 years ago and has been overseas since October 1944. "Last week I was dozing off" wrote Irv, from a hospital in France, "when all of a sudden in walks a colonel, a major and two captains. The colonel made a very pretty speech and said how proud they were of all of us guys who were out there on the front lines. Then he pinned the Purple Heart on my pajama top." The Abramsons received the medal in the mail last week. They have another child, Annette, 13, a student at Roosevelt high school. Irv is the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Kushner, longtime Residents of Albany Pk.

Telegram and news accounts of Mr. Abramson's being wounded on December 11 during the Battle of the Bulge. Photocopy provided by Mr. Abramson.

Wounded on December 11, 1944, Mr. Abramson explains below how he decided to let his folks know that he had been injured, trying not to alarm them. The nurse's letter, as he dictated it, follows on the next page.

After I was wounded I was brought back to a hospital, where I was unconscious for two or three days. I was seriously wounded and when I finally "came to" my first thoughts were of my family back home.

I knew the government would send them a notice of my being hurt and I didn't want them to worry. Since I was in a body cast from my chest to my feet, I could not write by myself but I wanted to send them a letter to tell them I was OK and not to worry.

There was a very nice nurse taking care of me and I asked her to write a letter that I dictated to her. What follows is that letter.

While I didn't want my parents to worry, the letter did the opposite, in a way, because since I did not write it myself my folks thought (I'd forbid) I had been blinded (or had my hands blown off). At least they knew I was still alive.

Mr. Abramson's first letter home after being wounded, dictated to "very nice nurse" on 12/15/44 and postmarked 12/19/44.

15 December

Dear Jack:

By now you have probably heard from the War Department that the nurses switched me up a little. One of the swell nurses in the hospital.

I am at liberty and she writes a few words to you for me so that you wouldn't worry. (Although I know you will) Until I hear a chance to start writing myself as I said, I was very lucky and only got scratched. The only reason I'm not writing the myself is because they won't let me sit up straight yet.

If they don't release me soon they will have to put me in a straitjacket - please to keep me down. I like to live a good - like I'm just living the good now writing this for me - so you and the rest of the gang look how many not how long we for what space of time. Please excuse it.

I always have been negligent that way my law. I am now like to discuss me - it should be very low at City Hall.

Well, my father around me and turning green.

with every one beginning to call for letters and just for quite a while I've better close now. I don't think you are allowed to stay low and when you get it but I'll have to learn to think of some good news stories.

As long for now my best to the family. Regards to all the kids and all my love and kisses to you.

Love,  
Dad



After she learned of her son's injury, Mrs. Abramson wrote this letter to him.

2

Dearest Son

I wish I could find the right words to start this letter. Especially today on Yom Kippur I think that you are 19 years old today and so far away from home. But I don't know when I say that we are all with you and ever you are.

Dad and I consider you very lucky to have a son as fine and good as you, and peaceful life

We are so very proud of you. You have given us a lot of joy and happiness. It seems as though we have done so little for you we return.

But dear the only thing I can say now is, that we are praying to God that you should regain your health and return home to a normal and peaceful life.



Scans of a photocopy of Mr. Abramson's key army records for  
 Immunization Register, Identification Card-Enlisted Reserve Corps,  
 and Selective Service System Registration Card

### IMMUNIZATION REGISTER<sup>1</sup>

LAST NAME <b>Abramson,</b>		FIRST NAME <b>Irving M.</b>		ARMY SERIAL NO. <b>7</b>	
GRADE <b>Pvt.</b>	COMPANY	REGT. OR STAFF CORPS <sup>2</sup>	AGE	RACE	

#### SMALLPOX VACCINE

DATE	TYPE OF REACTION <sup>3</sup>	MED. OFFICER <sup>4</sup>
<b>2/2/44</b>	<b>Immune</b>	<b>LPO</b>

#### TRIPLE TYPHOID VACCINE

DATES OF ADMINISTRATION			MED. OFFICER <sup>4</sup>
SERIES	1ST DOSE	2D DOSE	
1st.	<b>11/14/44</b>	<b>11/19/44</b>	<b>LPO</b>
2d.	<b>1.0.00</b>	<b>1.0.00</b>	
3d.			

#### TETANUS TOXOID

INITIAL VACCINATION		STIMULATING DOSES	
DATE	MED. OFF. <sup>4</sup>	DATE	MED. OFF. <sup>4</sup>
1st dose.			
2d dose.	<b>AL</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>GIC</b>
3d dose.			

#### YELLOW FEVER VACCINE

### IDENTIFICATION CARD—ENLISTED RESERVE CORPS

This is to Certify That **Irving M. Abramson** Private AC Unass

Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_ (Name) Home address **Chicago, Ill.** (Grade) (City or county) (State)

was ~~transferred to~~ \*grade shown in **E.R.C. UNASSIGNED** (City) (State)

Enlisted Reserve Corps of the Army of the United States, on the **16th** day of **Aug.**, one thousand nine hundred and **forty-four** years of age

the period of **D. of War plus 6 mos** \*he was **1** years of age

by occupation a **Student** enlisted He has **Br** eyes, **F** hair, **Ruddy** complexion, and is **5** feet **4** inches in height

Dates of immunization: Smallpox \_\_\_\_\_ Typhoid \_\_\_\_\_

ARMED FORCES INDUCTION STATION  
 100 W. VAN DYKE STREET  
 CHICAGO 4, ILLINOIS

Given at Headquarters **Edward E. O'Hara**  
 16th day of Aug., one thousand nine hundred and **forty-four**

\*Cross out words not applicable.  
 FOR THE COMMANDING OFFICER, **Colonel, Cavalry,**  
 W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 166—October 22, 1942 Commanding Officer  
 (Over)



"DOG" TAG

THE "RUPTURED DUCK"  
 INSIGNIA OF THE  
 HONORABLY DISCHARGED  
 VETERAN

### SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION

Approval of Budget Bureau not required

**Abramson, Irving M.**  
 (Last name) (First name) (Middle name)

Selective Service No. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

has been classified in Class **5-A** (Until 19\_\_\_\_) by  Local Board.  Appeal Board,  
 by vote of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  President  
 (Date of meeting) (Member of local board)

**MAR - 7 1952** 19\_\_\_\_ **W. J. Ford**

The law requires you, subject to heavy penalty for violation, to carry this notice, in addition to your Registration Certificate, on your person at all times—to exhibit it upon request to authorized officials—to surrender it, upon entering the armed forces, to your commanding officer.

For advice, see your Government appeal agent.  
 The law requires you: (1) To keep in touch with your local board; (2) to notify it of any change of address; (3) to notify it of any fact which might change your classification; (4) to comply with the instructions on the notice of classification part of this form.

SSS Form No. 110 (Revised 4-15-50)

### REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that in accordance with the Selective Service Proclamation of the President of the United States

**Irving Melvin Abramson**  
 (First name) (Middle name) (Last name)  
**Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Ill.**  
 (Place of residence)

(This will be placed with the 2 of the Registration Card)

has been duly registered this **30th** day of **October**, 19\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 (Signature of registrant)

Registrar for Local Board **59** **Cook** **I.**  
 (Number) (City or county) (State)

THE LAW REQUIRES YOU TO HAVE THIS CARD IN YOUR PERSONAL POSSESSION AT ALL TIMES

U. S. S. FORM 2 (Revised 6/10/41) 16-210



# World War II Honoree



World War II Veteran



## Irving M. Abramson

BRANCH OF  
SERVICE  
U.S. Army

HOMETOWN  
Chicago, IL

HONORED BY  
Irving Abramson



### ACTIVITY DURING WWII

100TH INFANTRY DIVISION. FOUGHT THROUGH THE EUROPEAN THEATER.  
SERIOUSLY WOUNDED IN THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE. ENLISTED AT 17  
YEARS OF AGE.

MILITARY SERVICE RECORD  
P.F.C. IRVING ABRAMSON  
MILITARY SERIAL #

In 1943 I graduated from Lane Technical High School and enrolled for college at the Illinois Institute of Technology with expectations of being an engineer one day. Tuition was very expensive for those days and it was quite a hardship for my parents to help me financially. At the end of my first term the Army came to the school and gave all interested students an aptitude exam. Those who scored high were given a chance to go to college at government expense. I felt this was a way to get an education without my parents sacrificing so I agreed. The following is what happened as a result of that decision.

August 16, 1943: I enlisted in the U.S. Army when I was seventeen (17) years old. The army promised if I enlisted at that time they would send me to college at government expense for four (4) years. At the end of the four years I would receive a B.S. in mechanical engineering and be advanced in rank to a second lieutenant. In return I had to promise to serve in the armed forces for a minimum of three (3) years.

Sept. 8, 1943: I was sent to the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wi. to begin the education promised under the "Army Specialized Training Program" (A.S.T.P.). I attended school there for one full term.

Feb. 1, 1944: The army disbanded the program and all of the men in the program were sent home to await further orders. In about a month those orders came by mail.

March 13, 1944: I was ordered to report to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, for induction into active military service. Previously I had been in the inactive reserve forces. I was then sent to Fort Wheeler, Georgia for basic military training.

Mid July, 1944: After basic training I was assigned to a permanent military unit. I was sent to an army camp in North Carolina to join the 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (The Century Division). The training at this point was more specifically battle related.

Oct. 6, 1944: I, along with the 100<sup>th</sup> Division, was sent overseas to join the U.S. fighting forces in Europe. By this time the U.S. had already established a beachhead at Normandy and was beginning to move east through France. Our unit was sent by train to New York to a port of debarkation from which we would board a ship to cross the Atlantic for Europe. I spent 48 hours in New York (Manhattan) before boarding a troop ship (which I believe was named "America"). The ocean voyage took about 12 or 13 days. We zig-zagged across the Atlantic to try and avoid enemy submarines which preyed on troop ships. We ultimately crossed the ocean safely.

Oct. 20, 1944: We arrived in Marseilles, France. We stayed in Marseilles for about 48 hours while our superiors received specific orders and reorganized our unit for a long march through France. I was eighteen years old and in France. It was hard for me to believe. We marched out of Marseilles in a couple of days and marched and fought, and marched and fought all through France and Germany (See "100<sup>th</sup> Infantry History" attached).

Dec. 11, 1944: For several nights before this date we were pushing east through the Black Forest. We had been battered by constant artillery attacks by the Germans. At dusk on this day we stopped our advance and started to dig fox holes to rest for the night. Because of the extreme cold weather, the ground was very hard and it was difficult to dig those fox holes. Several soldiers got together to dig one large hole that they could all get into. When we had dug down about a foot deep, another artillery attack began. I had been digging with two other soldiers. The three of us laid down, face down, in this shallow hole in an attempt to protect ourselves from flying shrapnel from the exploding artillery shells. I was in the middle between my two buddies. Several hours elapsed. When things quieted down I looked up and realized that my two buddies had been wounded. I laid there pondering what I should do when I lapsed into unconsciousness. I woke up three days later in a M.A.S.H hospital. I learned later that the two soldiers with me had died in that hole. I had suffered a broken leg, numerous burns (from the searing fragments of the shells) and a chest wound which had punctured my left lung. I was told that this all happened at the height of action during the "Battle of the Bulge" The M.A.S.H. hospital was a tent hospital set up right behind the front lines to take first aid, emergency care of the wounded. I was in a cast from my left foot up to my left arm pit. I was unable to be moved for about a week. Then I was moved to a full service hospital many miles west to Dijon, France. and later to a large hospital in Marseilles, France. I was hospitalized in Europe from 12/11/44 until 3/11/45. During that time I had numerous surgeries and periods of recuperation to put me back together again. To this day I bless the compassionate and miraculously talented doctors and nurses that saved my life. During my time in Dijon I was awarded the Purple Heart during a short but impressive military ceremony.

March 11, 1945: I was sent from Marseilles to Paris France in preparation of a return to the U.S. for the balance of my recuperation. (See "My Fifteen Minutes of Fame", attached )

March 12, 1945: I was loaded on a stretcher and put on an airplane with a number of other wounded G.I.s for a trip to New York.

March 13, 1945: We arrived in New York and put up in a temporary hospital prior to being assigned to (supposedly) a military hospital near our own homes. Somebody didn't know much about geography because I was assigned and subsequently sent to a Winter General Hospital in Topeka, Kansas. I still had a lot of healing to do and spent seven months at this hospital. During that time I was given passes to come home for short visits. This was the first time I saw my parents since my training days in the U.S. a year before.

October 25, 1945: I was finally released from the hospital and given an honorable, medical discharge from the U.S. Army.

## MY FIFTEEN MINUTES OF.....FAME ???

Irv Abramson

Why the question marks in the title? Well, I'm not sure of how loose you'll allow me to get with the word "Fame". With apologies to those who may think I've given it too broad a definition, here's my story. For myself, I will always think of the incident as "my fifteen minutes".

I was seventeen years old when I enlisted in the United States Army in October of 1943. I was eighteen years old in December, 1944, when I was seriously wounded during a German artillery attack in the infamous World War II "Battle of the Bulge". I turned nineteen while in an army hospital in France, recovering from those wounds and that's where my story starts.

In February, 1945, after being treated in three different medical facilities in France, I was sent to a convalescent hospital in Marsailles, France for "R and R" (rest and relaxation). Not only was my recovery incomplete but my body was encased in a cast that went from my left foot (with just toes showing) up to my belly button. It was not a pretty sight.

About noon time, on a beautiful, bright February 2<sup>nd</sup> day, I was given the news that every soldier prayed to hear....."Soldier, you're going home!" It wasn't more than a few hours later that I was loaded on a stretcher and taken by ambulance to the local train depot. It was only then that I became aware that I was only one of forty or fifty other recovering wounded G.I.s that were about to be loaded on a hospital train to begin the trip home. Our train's destination was Paris, France where we would all be transferred to an airplane for the trip back to the United States.

The railroad cars were former passenger cars that had been specially converted and outfitted to carry patients on stretchers. The cars were gutted of seats and rigged with long, horizontal brackets mounted to the side wall of the cars to which the stretchers were fastened. They were mounted three high with about thirty-six inches between them. I wound up in the middle position with one stretcher above me and one below. It was the furthest thing from deluxe travel as you could possibly get. However, none of us there had a complaint. We were going home and it didn't matter how !

The trip to Paris was an overnight journey. The train started rolling at about dusk. I can still hear the exceptionally loud clickety-clack of the wheels. I guessed that the exaggerated sound was because of the extreme bareness of the reconverted railway cars.

I had drifted off to sleep but was awakened about 10:00 P.M. by a severe pain in my casted foot. The pain was so intense that I called out for a "medic" (first aid man) who was on duty in our car. When he checked my foot he explained, with concern, that it had swollen up badly and the pain was probably caused by the cast cutting into it. He told me he was going to get a tool to cut the cast and relieve the pressure but first he called to an assistant to stay with me until he returned. The assistant was a pleasant, smiling lady dressed in olive drab army fatigues. What I remember most was her sincere concern, sympathy and kindness. Her voice was calming and comforting and took the edge off of the pain. The first aid man returned shortly and proceeded to cut away the cast and my discomfort was soon relieved. During the entire process the lady "angel" held my hand and spoke soothingly about our return home. The medic asked me if I was O.K. I assured him I was and thanked him. He said he would return later to check on me.

Then the “angel” asked me to reassure her that I was O.K. and when I did she leaned over and kissed me. Holy smoke! She kissed me! In the instant it took for the shock to wear off, she was gone. I was devastated; I never got the chance to thank her.

About half an hour later the medic returned to check on me, as he said he would. Once again I assured him I was O.K. Then he asked, “Do you know who that lady is that held your hand?” I said I didn’t and was disappointed that I didn’t get a chance to thank her. “Soldier”, he said, “That was Marlene Dietrich. She rides these trains regularly as a volunteer “maiden of mercy”. She prefers being anonymous and doesn’t look for any thanks.”

We arrived in Paris the next morning. Later that day we were loaded on an airplane and flew back to the U.S. I never saw Ms. Dietrich after that one special night. I can tell you that my experiences during World War II could fill a small book but one of the most outstanding and memorable was “my fifteen minutes of fame” when Marlene Dietrich kissed me.

## SHOWCASE

# Berlin gives Dietrich a birthday gift

By TOBY HELM

BERLIN—The city of Berlin issued a formal apology for treating Marlene Dietrich as a traitor as it staged a day of celebrations to mark her 100th birthday.

After a wreath was laid at her grave on Thursday, German president Johannes Rau described the singer and film star as an "extraordinary artist" who "worked actively for democracy and freedom during the era of the Nazi dictatorship."

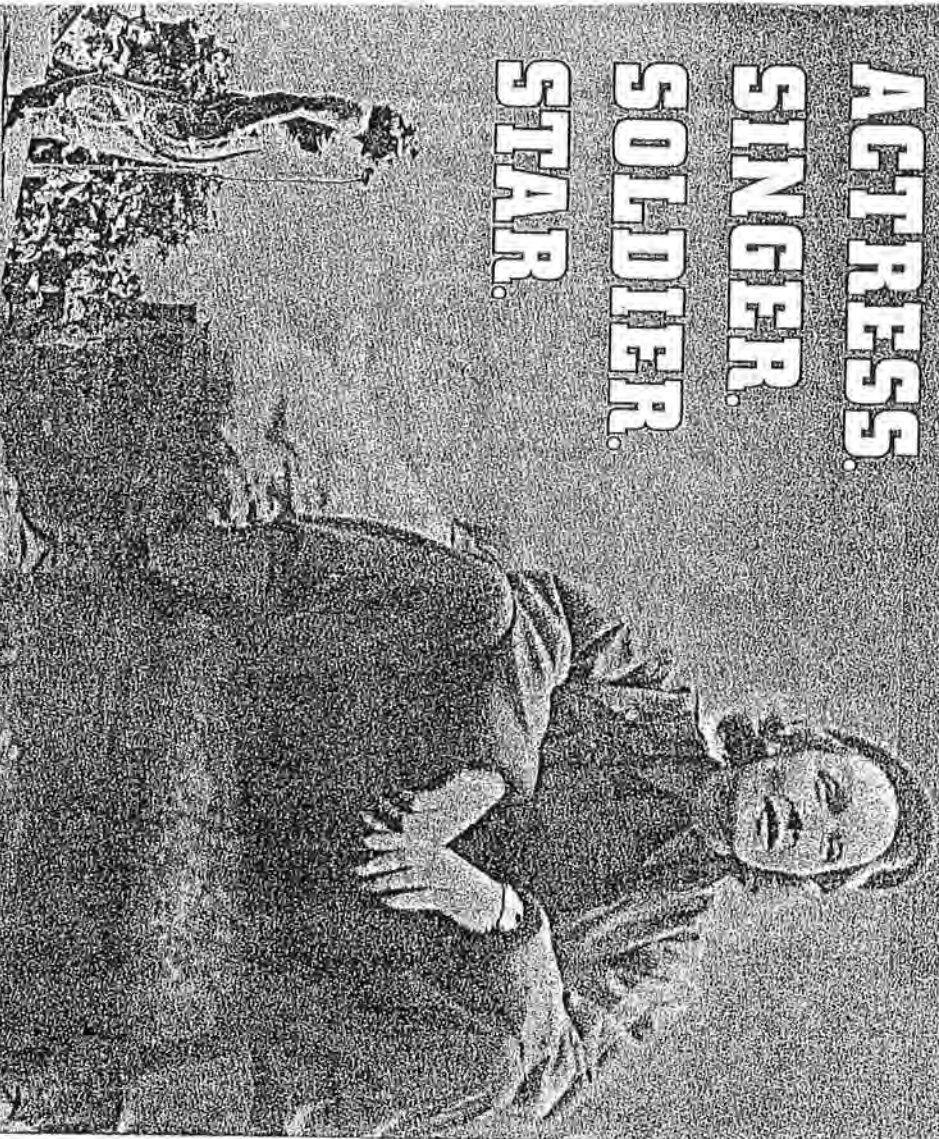
Dietrich left her homeland in 1930 and became a U.S. citizen. "Hitler is an idiot," she said in a wartime interview. "Boys, don't sacrifice yourselves. The war is crap."

At her return visit to Berlin in 1960, Nazi supporters spat at her and waved banners saying "Go home Marlene."

"The hostility she faced from some then brought shame to our city," said a representative of the city's mayor, Klaus Wowereit. "Berlin wants to apologize and asks for forgiveness."

Daily Telegraph

# ACTRESS. SINGER. SOLDIER. STAR.



Director, she was a legend. Tough, provocative, outrageous. And that was only the beginning. She became the German born, all-American girl, entertaining troops on the front lines, doing whatever she could for "the boys" on the battlefield.

FORMER CLASSIC MOVIES PRESENTS

# MARLENE DIETRICH

HER OWN SONS

A WORLD PREMIERE DOCUMENTARY

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27 AT 8PM/7:30PM (ET) ENCORE  
RETURNED BY REQUEST OF 20 MOVIES, THURSDAYS IN BARBARA



Turner Classic Movies  
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