

**Edward Abramson
Veteran**

**Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on 4 August 2004
at Veteran's Home
Cedarhurst NY**

**Interviewer: I
Edward Abramson: EA**

I: Could you give us your full name, date of birth and place of birth please?

EA: Sure my name is Edward Abramson , I was born September 21 1920 in Manhattan.

I: What was your educational background before entering the service?

EA: I was at NYU and city college for ½ year and another ½ year about 1 year .

I: Do you remember where you were, how you heard about it and your reaction to Pearl Harbor?

EA: Well I was selling newspapers. At the time we were selling papers at night and it was on a Sunday and of course when we heard it was on the radio we had to go out 2 or 3 hours later and in downtown Brooklyn that was headline now so we were gonna sell a lot of papers. We didn't know what Pearl Harbor was, we didn't know anything about Pearl Harbor. But we knew it was gonna be a headline about Daily News. At the time we were selling them at 2 cents a piece, 60 cents for 100. We figured this would be a good day we'd make 5 or 6 dollars.

I: Do you remember your personal reaction to the news?

EA: We didn't know what Pearl Harbor was.

I: Okay were you drafted or did you enlist?

EA: I was drafted. I came home one day and said "Mom I received a letter from the President of the United States." and she was not happy about that.

I: Okay, you went in November of 42' where did you go for your basic training?

EA: What had happened December 7 we went in there, We were in by December 7 and took a train up to Camp Upton and I'll never forget my sister and my mother was coming to meet me at Grand Central Station and going to a little place around the corner and they were expecting us to come back but we didn't. We went the other way when that happened I ran into my mom and sister and said we're leaving and they turned around and asked what happened they saw 2 MP's grab a hold of me by my collar and bring me to the train. We came to Camp Upton received our shots and got right on another train. We checked out different points we had. I had about the same amount of points so we figured we'd go into the air corp. And we wound up at Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina. And we lined up we figured

we were taking a break at the train. We probably were heading for Florida and we had this Colonel in front of us with this microphone , harsh voice and he was eventually killed. “ I want to tell you fella's your in the infantry and 6 months from now most of you will be dead.” We all just looked at each other, and 10 days before this we were all home sleeping in our own places. That's how we found ourselves in the infantry.

I: Have you ever been away from home up at this point?

EA: No I haven't. From there they brought us into the 397, 398 and 399 Regiments in the 100 Division, and of course I was assigned to the 100 Division to the 399 and I was assigned to the S3. I never heard anything about the S3 but I learned the S3 was the pulse of the Regiment the army moves only on assignments. The S3 doesn't say a word the army keeps quite. That's how it works out. We work from Division to the Regiment and the Regiment now the S3 was Operations it was consistent of the full Colonel , the Major, the master Sergeant, Sergeant and myself. One thing about the Germans they knew they had to destroy the S3 in order to stop anything from happening. It took 8 or 9 days for new replacements to come in. Most important is they kept the S3 very tight because they knew want to make experts from us. And that what we were. We knew how to read a map in the last moment, it had to be done. We didn't realize the seriousness offered until we went on Maneuvers in Tennessee and of course you had 8 problems 1 a week and we'd destroy every problem there was, that was fine and we'd wait 4 or 5 days later for a new problem. By that time the maneuvers were over in 8 weeks we landed in Fort Bragg that's when we woke up and said My God (the rest inaudible.) What happened basically was. I'll go ahead of myself. We had 175 days of fighting there and we had lost 2 S3's out of 3. We was the only one not destroyed and one of the things I could give credit to was the Colonel. We was never under direct fire mainly 88's. They'd go out and try to reach out to us and we'd be near the heavy weapons. With the heavy weapons you'd have A B C and D. D would be heavy weapons E F G and H. H would be heavy weapons and so on. With 3 Battalions and what happened was we'd be near the heavy weapons and the thoughts behind that were the Germans would be afraid of firing in that area. We'd get where the fire was coming from and we'd have to depend on the OP's the Operations People they themselves would know that they were where the Germans were. They kept going into the Rifle Companies. It was the toughest fighting we had the most dangerous was the mountains.

I: Okay can we go back for a second before you get to that. When did you go out seas?

EA: Went overseas, landed in Marseilles in October 1944.

I: Okay, did you go in Convoy?

EA: We went on trucks , we had to relieve the 25 Division. Bacharach, France it was a couple days after we landed in Marseilles. They gave us our ammunition grenades everything else, put is on the trucks. Two nights and three days. It was a big rainy night and we had to find holes and we took the holes from the 45 division. You see here we were laying in water up to our necks and we were laughing. What are we laughing about, one of our buddies couldn't find a hole. It's amazing sometimes when you think back your in water up to your neck and your laughing.

I: Okay. So that was your first combat and you said how many days?

EA: 175 days and that was it from the time we took Stuttgart. That was the end of the L fighting, then of course we had our problems with Stuttgart with the team they had and the French army they had these (unable) coming raping their women and they were asked to stop. If they didn't stop we'd have to drive them out . And here we just finished battling and gave the army until 12 Midnight to get out. It was like a whole army fighting a Division. So it didn't work out so they gave orders for us to get out and when things settled down they brought us back into Stuttgart.

I: So this was the French?

EA: Yeah the French army, (inaudible) African Army.

I: Can you tell us about some of your combat experiences?

EA: Sure, This one we could never forget. Of course with the S3 we were moving all over now we were coming up to Luxembourg just before the battle of the Bulge we didn't realize it was something we'd be fighting we were sent to one Battalion and 2 companies were hurt really badly and we sent in another Battalion on the other side before that we had 3 Battalions at one time fighting and each other didn't know where the other was. It was amazing because an 88 shell landed about no more than 10 feet and Colonel Tyhsen and I were on a mat together. The other fellas couldn't at the time when a battle happened and one of us is on the mat you are suppose to stay there with it and we stayed there and didn't sleep for 48 hours and didn't what so ever because the battle was going on.

What we said at the very end when it was all over , we said it was so amazing that we didn't care about our lives we were so concerned we couldn't get killed for the sake of the other men that were out fighting it was a physiological thing. It didn't matter about us getting killed it was staying alive for the benefit of others. It was amazing but very true. The only ones that knew about it was us , the two of us on the mat.

Another area which was very important was my brother and I. He was in the Air Corp and we met together for a day or two. He didn't feel good and mom was home alone with our sister. And he was going to volunteer S and Air gunner the air radio and he went during the Colander Raids at that time I lost track of him completely. Now we were on the trucks in Marseilles. It was the last mail call and there I get a little letter a little card envelope a 6X5 up in the corner it had Staff Serg. Irv Abramson 180 Crystal St. Brooklyn NY. I was one of the happiest guys , it was the most important things that happened. Alot of the guys were concerned but it didn't bother me at all, of course because of that letter. That was something you'll never forget.

I: That's right.

EA: He was home that's all that counted. Another area after the war was over, we stopped fighting and we were there to help pick up and we hear the radio going and their cheering in London and we were just sitting there quite as could be. We weren't able to enjoy that at the same time as others.

Another area was, most of us needed one more point to get home. We needed 56 points and many of us had 55 and now we were coming home. Expecting the bands and coming into Staten Island there was one guy on the pier waving and that was it.

I: Were you ever there for the occupation?

EA: Oh No we were there till the war was over for a while and then they prepared us to go to Japan. So we were ready to go to Japan then the bomb and it was over.

I: What was your reaction about the atomic bomb?

EA: We were glad. We couldn't care less what happened we were coming home. We were very depressed for a long time. After the war was over here we were still in town and alot of guys were discussed and I get a letter from my brother cause I was writing letters home to my family and he says what really got me was "Your alive and after all of this and Its over. Be Thankful your alive." And I showed it to alot of the fellas and that sort of helped them out during their times of depression. And then you wonder why very few guys got through the fighting and very few got back. And you wondered how a guy could get in there and be happy being in a fox hole because he wasn't out on Patrol cause he was in there and not out being dead its amazing see.

Another area was we came into a field one night and we were tired. There was a house or a barn and we wanted to go inside but the Colonel said no and we were about 100 yards away. The iron army

came in too during that night and the barn was blown apart . It was totally destroyed killed all of them. These little things you remember we were really thankful that we lasted that long of a time. They might have had the 103, I don't know. Some of the guys in the 103 were just young fellas and they sent them over and they didn't know how to put a round in their rifles and in less than a week 2/3rds of that Division 15,000 men were destroyed. I like to meet guys when we were up a Fort Jackson they were just young kids they were like our sister outfit. They were the 103 there were alot of stories that are tough. How they came in and they were captured and destroyed everything.

I: Where do you think your most difficult combat was?

EA: I think it was (inaudible) cause you were in the forest. And the 88's were coming in . And it wasn't where they were going to land. They were hitting trees and there was 1000's of 1000's of tree burst that's where we lost alot of men in that area cause there was no place to go . We were hoping not to get hit by the tree burst. There was no shelter no place to go. They were firing 88's it was all forest there. In fact when I go to Atlantic City some times I'll see a clutch of trees and It reminds myself of being there . Its amazing.

I: Did you have enough personal equipment plenty of warm clothes and boots ?

EA: No it was ridicules there, we had our over coats they never changed anything, we finally got out and took our first showers, we had pimples every place just the living conditions was the worst of the worst. It was like what are we doing here, but what could you do.

I: Did you suffer from frost bite at all?

EA: Some guys suffered from that . I was very fortune it.

I: Did you ever get the winter boots or did you just have regulation shoes?

EA: No they gave us boots, we had boots but the helmet was the best thing. That helmet did everything for us and sometimes you had your rations they had general lines. They had more freedom what the Germans would do is zero in on an area and then leave , then we'd go there. We lost alot of men, it was something we never talked about, but the fella's are talking about it now. The thing that hurt is we have an organization the 100 Division Association what is heart breaking is to see all these guys caps all in a line. Back when I turned 80 they teased me and said there is very few 79's left and when I turned 80 they said there are very few 90's men, lets try to get there. It's a type of humor we have to have. Sometimes you see the fella's with their families and you know if they didn't miss that shot their whole families wouldn't have been. It's thoughts that you have it's too close to it. No one is a hero. Everyone goes through a mess.

One fella was driving a truck Howick ?? was his name and they put him in a rifle company. All of a sudden we hear that he is a hero. We got a hold of him one day and asked what happened. He was in one rifle company and one of the squadrons was caught, the whole Platoon rather. The 5th Platoon and he was one the other side and machine guns were hitting them and there was no way of getting out of it. In the mean time they must have spotted him (Howick) and as they were repositioning their guns for better leverage the Germans I mean as they were doing that and he knew they were going to spot him. He ran and as he ran he tripped and as he tripped he through his grenade and wiped them all out. He was a hero, you never know.

I: What was your relations like with the French people, did you have much contact with them?

EA: We had a bunch of contact with them. We really did we felt sorry for them because we knew that there was nothing there, it was just all destroyed. Everywhere we went was destroyed. When we went on furlough we had to pass a (inaudible) and saw a window, it was like what did a window look like. It

was an existence you look back. I should have mentioned this it's very important. We had gone from Fellbach to Stuttgart Rome as we were walking we saw these people we thought they were prisoners, it was like they were walking in a trance. Just walking and walking as far as we were concerned we were tired ourselves we kept going one way and they went the other and they went a little further and sure enough there was a labor camp. They were prisoners coming out of the labor camp. How the infantry works its that when the Germans retreat then we send in the Calvary. And their job is to continue going after the them until they stop and then the Calvary stops until the party comes in. But they didn't know that and they kept going and the camp was freed it was a real break through. And by that time we were coming into Stuttgart Germany that's where we were during this pass over it was a holiday cause a holiday was coming. And here we had 2 soldiers and and the holocaust victims together for the first time. We couldn't get near them because they were diseased and all that and we had orders to keep away from them because they were diseased. They were in the camp that way and then things were getting better at that time and we could get together.

I met this one lady and we were talking and she said she came from Paris and her sister was at this address. And I told her I was going to Paris for 3 days. So I took the address from her and put it in my pocket and that was the end of it. I'm in Paris now after 2 days and I was going to leave in the morning and I look in my pocket and there was the address. I figured I through it away, it didn't make sense to me. So it was early in the morning 10 o'clock I'm not too far from the address she gave I'll walk its like 4 or 5 landings and I knock on the door. The neighbor came out and I told him and sowed him the address that I had. They said oh they moved over here. So I went place to place and by 1 o'clock I figured I couldn't do it anymore and It became a challenge for me after that. About 12 Midnight I came out of the underground and there was a big light , a big clock and the address was about ½ block away and I went there. And I rang the bell and you could see through the door and they opened the door for me. I gave a man the letter you could see a light through the door in the distance in the back of the house near a kitchen and there were people there. He ran there to them and they were all screaming it was great. I just walked away and to this day I don't know why I reacted that way I must have been tired or shocked who knows what it was. So I wrote a story on that and I put down that there was a clock by the station never realizing that there were loads of clocks by the station and that was it. They found each other. And I was never able to find the results of that. But they had the address of her on the other side of the letter where she was in Stockholm.

I: Were you up to this point, were you aware of the camps?

EA: No we were totally unaware. Remember all we did was the fighting and there was no newspapers, nothing that we knew about.

I: What was your reaction when you saw these people and found out about them?

EA: We felt bad cause we saw how they looked they were like skeletons and then they were treated and they were free. But they were freed by tired guys and was the only ones able to help them. Then corps came in and they were able to help them and give them food. There was two groups fighting , there were the victims and the ones helping them Basically but we never had anything to do with helping them. The Germans just left them. There was no such thing as hugging and saying hey how are you. They were in a daze we initially figured they were prisoners of war but later on we realize what they went through. We had gone through a lot too. So you didn't have that understanding at that time. But later we had that understanding between us knowing how bad it was. But we really didn't know how bad it was until we read it in the newspapers and there pictures were in there.

I: Okay when did you finally arrive home?

EA: Um I cam home February , middle of February 45'

I: 46'

EA: Yeah 1946.

I: Do you recall your reaction when you were in Europe your reaction of the death of President Roosevelt?

EA: You couldn't get any type of reaction out of us . We were a tired group of guys.

I: Just curiosity.

EA: He died you have to understand we were not in the same frame of mind as civilians. Not even in the Corp. They might have read things but we had nothing to read or nothing to see. And some died. We were seeing all the men die. One thing that struck us every infantry man knows and remembers the first guy that was killed and his number. McCarthy 32649520. I don't know my social security number but I know that. Its a good way to test somebody sometime, anybody in the infantry. Its amazing all our friends we talk about it.

I: After you were discharged did you make use of the G.I Bill at all?

EA: No I didn't I went back to work I ignored the 52-20 I did 2 weeks and that was it. You have to understand a break down. My parents and things were pretty rough during the depression times and the war was over now. And we wanted now to send money home, aloud to do things we couldn't do as soldiers. Mom would get \$50.00, 26 to keep and 20 what ever would go to them. So you think back, it was a nightmare, I remember seeing one fella the last time we were in a boat with us coming over and we saw him later on, 6 months later we could never say anything it was like a nightmare. Its a good thing you are doing something like this. You don't hear that everyday. Like laughing in a fox hole covered in dirty water up to your neck and raining and what are we laughing about. The one that can't find the fox hole to go in. We still laugh about that and here we are.

I: did you join any Veterans organizations ?

EA: Yes I joined the veterans of Foreign war and I got involved in Politics. I got married right away and then got involved in Politics I was involved for 40 years. They kept you away, I wouldn't join it and you would have to speak in front of large groups and things like that . That was how I met your governor he was just a kid. Do you see him often?

I: No not that often.

EA: You give him my best when you see him.

I: I will. Um Do you keep in contact with anyone that served with you?

EA: Yes we have the 100th Infantry Division and 6 of us together signed corporation papers 5 of us passed away. I was the only guy in there and we met once a year at a convention. In the beginning we making them and I got so involved with Politics and we'd come at that time, primary times so I could be at the conventions we'd met a few fella's and we'd be in a restaurant and we'd discuss things so we'd have all the gang together. Some of them have crutches and all of a sudden we are looking at the caps. The paper comes out 3 or 4 times these guys were lost . We're losing a lot of the guys, I don't know if you are realizing that. I went to one fella.

I: How would you say your time in the service changed or had an effect on your life?

EA: I don't know if it had an effect on my life . I was very thankful that I cam home and I was alive. And I think that because of that all the things that might have happened was minor. The bottom line was I was alive and I was not scratched and thankfully I was able to get away from that. The things, the guys, the bodies and everything else. It didn't effect me as much as it effects a lot of the guys I see

walking around still in shell shock like zombies and other guys . One fella he was on a mine and I went down to see him, he lost both his legs. One day we were walking I had to leave my company to find a tree and take a leak and now I want to catch up to them. I figured I'd go up around one way and I'm down running around on the grass and it took me maybe an hour. It was a little far to catch up to them, we had a lot of little incidences it came and go.

I: Did you get to see any USO shows when you were over there?

EA: No, we went from Marseilles right into combat stayed a few days and straight onto Stuttgart and it was over there was no such thing. We'd stop fighting a few days here and there when there was a break through. New Years Eve 44' we were right on the Bulge and what happened was shells started coming in so we thought it was our artillery. It was like what are they doing they were hitting us. We didn't realize it was the Germans and the 117th see we came in where ever we were and dug holes right away even the Colonel that's how it was. And the artillery, the Calvary rather they dug holes they were in the front and they were able to get on their trucks and the Germans apparently knew that . And they broke through our front lines and that was the line that protected us. At that time it was 6 in the morning and the break through was gone, there was no one in front of us so we made that big trip in the S3 went all along the ridge we took another part of the country and we were trapped. They called on the 36 the Texas Division. They saved our lives they had a band of a 24 or 36 hour walk and they finally broke the lines. They saved us . So I have to say Texas is for me 36. Find some of the guys from the 36 sometimes you can tie in some of the stories. They made that force march to help us they really did. Tough group of guys the 36 and the 45th.

I: Could you hold up that photo and show us. Where and when was that taken?

EA: This was in Paris the war was over it was Paris on my way to London for a 10 day holiday . Now you are finding out some stories Gloria (talking to someone in the background.)

I: Well thank you so much for your interview .

EA: Okay take care .

END