

**Abraham Berg
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke
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Interviewers**

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

AB: I was, I was, my first name is Abraham, my last name is Berg, I was born November 16, 19 1920.

I: Ok, where please?

AB: A, Brooklyn, Brooklyn.

I: What was your educational background prior to entering service

AB: I went to public school, Junior high and I graduated from high school, I didn't go to college, graduated and went to high school and I went to work. My parent had 4 sons, and my oldest brother was in the first draft and right before the war broke out and he was stationed in Fort Hamilton before the war broke out. He was on vacation and he was called back in.

I went in, in June but I was inducted in July. That's they figure you were..., okay in July I was inducted into service and I think the 19th July 1942. I entered in the air force and I flew twice in a B-26. The first time I flew, the first time ever. It was quite a little plane. Coming from the landing, they couldn't get the wheels down. Okay so the first time I was in a plane, scared as anything. I sat on a chair and I started to put, I didn't know how to put the chute on, parachute.

I see the engineer; he's opening up the bomb bay and he keeps looking down and saying. I don't know what's what. I say to him what's the problem. He says we can't get the wheels down and he says what are you doing. I said I'm practicing how to put on the parachute in case I need it. I want to tell you something these planes are known as the falling coffin; you can't get out of these planes. By reading his manual book, I told him what to do, he pumped the wheels down, he was able to get them under when she landed before you had a lot of emergency trucks over there. The next time I took another chance, the next time I flew from Avon Park, Florida, that was Fort Myers. We're going to fly down to Lake Charles Louisiana, I took another chance, I flew again.

I: Was it going to be a B-25 also?

AB: No, B-26, don't get confused, it was known as the flying coffin. Let me tell something, they had a lot of crack ups. A lot of guys got killed in training in the states and you never heard anything about it. They should be recognized as much as we get recognized being overseas. I started in the air force for quite a while.

My brother went in, then I went in, and then my third brother he went in, he was stationed in the air force. He was in Okinawa. My kid brother was 17 and a half and he tried to get my parents to sign for him, they would not because they already had three sons in. When he reached 18, they gave him a choice, the army, navy, marines and the air force and he picked the navy. He was in the Omaha beach invasion. Two out of three of his landing crafts drawn, because he was bringing the soldiers over from England over to Omaha beach and two of his landing crafts hit mines and he had to land on the beach until they took him off. He saw a couple of dead GIs over there.

Being that three brothers were overseas, I volunteered into the infantry, not only me, a couple of other guys we volunteered for the infantry. At that time, I was in Camp Alexander, Louisiana, this was complete training. Whatever training we did was with live ammunition. I fired the M-1 rifle. I fired the blue hand bazooka. I fired the mortar. I had a chance to fire everything. The training we had was house to house fighting. They put up shacks and we had house to house fighting. I landed in France in the later part of December, this was just before the end of the Battle of the Bulge. We went right into Germany.

I: Now were you as a replacement

AB: Replacement, I was placed into General Patton's 3rd army 65th division, 261st infantry. We went right into Germany. I was in Germany 5 months before the war ended. I don't want to go through the whole story back then. I saw a concentration camp. One of General Patton's tank we opened up one of the prisoner camps to release some of the American prisoners.

I: How did you feel when you saw these things.

AB: Scared, Twice I could feel a bullet pass right by my ear. You can feel it go right by you. We blew up, I didn't blow it up. Most of the time I was with my squad. I was a corporal. We had the sergeant and we had eight guys besides us. I didn't know nobody. The only name I knew was Charlie Baker. He was my sarge. He almost got us killed a couple of times.

There were two German Messerschmidt that landed because they ran out of gas and they went to another town to surrender. And sergeant as smart as he was, he set these two planes on fire. They were out of gas but they still have the fumes. These two planes exploded. I don't forget the propeller broke off and stuck in the ground vertically. I threw myself on the ground and nobody got hurt. We were lucky.

Another time, this was during nighttime, we never want to fire a rifle at nighttime. Because when you find your rifle target and you pull the trigger you get like fire stacks coming out and they could tell where you are, where you're firing from. Let the fire at you, don't fire at them.

There was bunker, concrete foundation, we were getting machine fire from there. We just laid there. My sergeant said to me load the bazooka, He's was going to shoot. I loaded the bazooka, you got to get away because a lot of heat comes off from the back of the bazooka. You have to get away from it and he pulled the trigger. The mouth of the bunker is small and you have the machine gun coming out of the square it was really small and he hit it.

I felt so bad. Why did I feel so bad? Because Hitler was using the German youth and they must have been young. We couldn't see their faces because their helmets were so big on their face. We couldn't see but we knew they were 15, maybe 16 years old. Big deal, that's hat we killed. While we were going, we took a lot of towns, village farms. If any German civilian came out, because at times, not always but at times they would set out a hot chow for us. Any time the civilians came out to get something to eat, I'd tell them to get back in the line because whatever was left, we're going to throw away anyways. I never chased them away.

And one time, I'll never forget this we were told that anytime we took a town, it could be a village or whatever it was, I don't remember, we should always go into the house because of snipers. And we had to chase the civilians from the house, they had to go out. This young woman with a baby and a mother, she came over to me and says to me it's just me, my baby and mother and I said just go back into the house and I'll see that nobody bothers you. I much as they cared about us, I was concerned for them also. I never the SS. Mostly the Wehrmacht. They were running away from the Russians. Because the Russians were right behind us. They were surrendering to us. If I had to surrender, I would raise my hand, drop my rifle and I raise my hand too. Better than getting killed. These are the some of the stories that I could tell you. You know there's a lot but, I'm going to show you.

I: What were your feelings about General Patton? How did you feel about General Patton.

AB: Yeah, I'm glad you asked me a question. My feeling for General Patton he was a good General but it was a little bit on the right side after all was over, they took the straight away, the third army away from him. He wanted to turn around and fight the Russians and we had no reason. Let me just tell you something, the Russians were our allies, okay, Eisenhower was the one who gave the Russians permission to take Berlin, because if we went into Berlin, God knows. They lost over three hundred thousand men taking Berlin.

They wouldn't let Patton go in there. Patton would turn around and fight the Russians and that's what Eisenhower was afraid of. That's why he took away the third army from him. I saw General Patton only one time. General Bradley, I never saw. Anytime we went out at night, I never had an officer with us. It was always with the squad. I'd like to show you my... Do you have any questions to ask me?

I: Did you reach any concentration camps and what were their names

AB: Once I did but I don't remember the name

I: How did you feel when you saw it

AB: If anything, it's sickness. Makes you sick. I think about it today. People sat down there; they had no stomach. They couldn't eat. They gave them food, they couldn't eat, because they had no stomach to eat. How I feel about it, it's hard to describe the feelings that you have towards them. I was with a lot of them. You want to stay away; you don't want to get involved too much. My main interest was to free Americans that were held there, there were more. Although those that were held prisoners by the German's the civilians they're just as important as American, to get them out of there. Which was important. You asked me about General Patton, I had a lot of respect for General Patton because he was a good general. Even though he got a lot of guys killed but he was still a good general.

I: When you went in December of 44 did you have winter gear?

AB: No. I did not have winter gear. I had my coat, and I never wore, I had a jacket. I did not have a winter gear. I was under the impression that a helmet was a protection for bullets, It was not that. It was for shrapnel. Because a bullet would go right through and we had a couple of guys that got one right through the helmet.

This is my discharge papers if you like look at it. On the back there is a list of medals I'm entitle too.

I: I see you have got the bronze star?

AB: Yes, I was given the bronze star. This is a certificate that was sent with bronze star. Let me explain something to you. I received the combat badge when you received a combat badge you are entitle to the bronze star. If you were in combat if you faced the enemy and you got the combat badge you get bronze star. If you need a copy, I can give you.

I: Yes, we will take it and put in your folder.

AB: I also have a copy of my discharge paper also you can have.

I: Did you ever get to see any USO shows while you are oversea.

AB: Yes, or No, No. I saw mostly the red cross. No, I did not see any shows overseas. I saw them in the states.

I: who did you see in the states?

AB: I saw Max Bear and Al Jonson.

I: Did you ever met the Russian troops?

AB: Yes, I did. I got the pictures with them. Definitely, I met the Russians.

I: What were your feelings about the Russians when you met them?

AB: I felt as they were our allies, I have nothing against. They treated us as we treated them, had no problem whatsoever. You have to remember they lost with civilians over 20 million people and same as American soldiers that were 400000 killed we should have the same respect to Russian soldiers that were killed. The veteran shows a copy of his medals that where on his discharge papers.

I: What is this patch?

AB: this is 65th division. I have all the original and this is my original dog badge. This over here is two battle stars, two major battle stars. I have here medal for World War II and this is occupation was the victory medal. I was in Europe when the War ended, when Roosevelt died and they put me into occupation forces from May 8, 1945 to February 1946.

I was not CI agent. What they had me to do? They had me to interpret. I would not allow them to cross the border. If they had any mail, I was supposed to take the mail. I had this lieutenant I don't even know his name; he never introduced it to me. And he said to me not to let anybody up to a major to cross the border. And I was thinking to myself, " I'm a Corporal and I would not let a major to cross the border and I don't even know the name of the lieutenant. I never did. They gave me 45 pistol, and then I went to another room, and I was not a big shot and I was not a big hero.

I: When was this photograph taken?

AB: this picture was taken when I was in USA on the leave. This medal is not my discharge paper it was given to me from government. That is the distinguished service cross.

I: What border were you guarding was it the border with the Soviet Union?

AB: No, I was guarding the Hungarian prisoners and the German prisoners. We did not capture the German prisoners they surrendered to us. Because they did not want to surrendered to the Russians. They raised their hands by the hundreds and we did not tread them mean.

I: well, do you have another story to tell us? What do you think was your most interesting event that you participated in?

AB: The most interesting event was when we blew two German Messerschmitt's. I did not blow it up, the sergeant blew it up. I also felt very bad when blew up the bunker. I don't know how he did it, but he hit right in the window of the bunker. And I felt really bad because Hitler was using the youth that time to fight the world and I felt bad but the sergeant said "How stupid could you be if it wasn't for them it could have been you."

Let me tell you something. I do programs in school. I started to go with the group and that program is that I do I don't talk about the War. I talk about American flag, I talk about PLW, I talk about the MIA. I did it in Florida, seven classes from the second grade to the fourth. I did it a couple schools in the states and I did with the group. When I found out that the groups were telling stories, I had to stop and quit. I go by myself now. I did two school in the Staten Island. My daughter is a teaching staff and I did two school. Here is thank you letters from kids. You can't read the whole thing but you can read one or two things. This is what the students sent me.

I: Is that the letters that the students wrote to you, thank you for coming.

AB: Right, right. I think that was a Florida and this was from Staten Island.

I: When you were discharge?

AB: it is March 31, 1946.

I: From where?

AB: from camp Upton.

I: After you return home did you make use of the GI bill?

AB: no, I did not.

I: Did you ever use the 5220 club?

AB: yes, hey I am here, I am with the Russians, that is me smoking a cigarette.

I: When was that taking?

AB: it was taken 1945.

I: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the death of the president?

AB: I don't have slightest idea, I don't remember.

I: Did you join any veterans' organizations?

AB: Yes, when I was 80, I'm 84 now. I joined with disabled veterans; I send them 25 dollars check to join up. They send me back the check because when you pass 80 you are automatically a lifetime member.

I joined the Jewish war veterans. I was three times commander. And they wanted me fourth time and I told them that Roosevelt died in his fourth time and I don't want to die myself. Also, American legion and veterans of foreign wars. That are the organizations that I belong too.

We have special education in the school on the fifth floor. They are couples of rooms there, and they bring specialists to come to the class. Once a month they came out and I get a pretty big crowd on the floor. We start off with allegiance to the flag than we have national anthem and then we have a couple of speeches that I put together I don't do it, I split it amongst other veterans. I want them to participate, I don't want all credit to myself. And then we have taps, and then after taps we were playing God Bless the USA. And we changed for God Bless America.

It is once a month every Monday at 9 o'clock. I don't want to keep it too long because the students want to go home and it is 10 minutes. I tell them why should, we wait once a year to remember all those young folks that gave their lives to fight and we should have the freedom. I tell it to them and they understand. That is very important to not to forget all the young, young fellows. We had a lot of them killed in the states.

When I was air force, we had a lot of crack ups and you never heard one thing about it. And one time they grounded these B-26 because we had so many accidents. When you have to take off you have to have certain RPMs to be able to gain height and they look at the meters and if you don't have the RPM, there is something wrong and there is not time to explain how to change and what to change. If the plane took off we would never gain height and we both crashed we had a plane that crashed that way. Because it could not gain height.

We used to go on five-mile hikes but for me it was not five miles hikes. It was 10 miles, because 5 miles there and 5 miles back. I might tell you raining, pouring, raining heavy, heavy. And we went to a small brook and we were wearing pants with underwear, because it was a cold. We went to the water like this here. Coming back the water was filled up like this here. I had to carry my rifle above my head like this. And I had friends to pull me out. I'm lucky my older brother, he was the first to come home. My brother that was in Okinawa, he was the second to come home. My youngest brother was third and I was the last one.

I: So, all of you came home safely?

AB: We all came home. Let me tell you something. We lost 5 men on the ship, after they went to brothel after that no soldiers were allowed to brothel. My mother had one son-in-law, and she put 5 stars in the window and we were all overseas.

There is a little story about my younger brother when he was telling me about Omaha, they lost two out of three of landing crafts, because he was bringing the soldiers from England over.

I: How do you think your time in the service had change or had an effect on your life?

AB: let me say something that I never forget. Sometimes I dream about it. I was never been in Vietnam but I have a dream about Vietnam. I was in Korea but not Vietnam. Let me tell what happen in my dream. So, we are in Vietnam and we're surrounded by the Vietnamese. Me and another soldier were able to get away, break out from being surrounded than we saw (it is all in the dream) an officer smoking a cigarette, and I went over and told him just put out the cigarette because from the smoke they can find where we are. That was that.

Do you have another question to ask me?

I: No, thank you very much for your interview.