



National Archives at St. Louis

1 Archives Drive St. Louis, Missouri 63138-1002

July 29, 2014

Mr. Brian Siddall
P.O. Box 3897
Ithaca, NY 14852

Reference: Charles Durning

Dear Sir,

I am writing you today as a follow up from your December 18, 2013 6:16 a.m. email to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) office concerning the award of the Bronze Star Medal to World War II veteran Charles Durning. (National Personnel Records Center [NPRC], request number 2-116-79328999). In your request, you claimed Private First Class (PFC) Durning was incorrectly awarded the Bronze Star. The December 30, 2013 response to this request explained the criteria used to determine the eligibility for the award of the Bronze Star Medal (BSM).

However, it appears this response did not satisfy your question and you send follow up email in February and April 2014 asking, "...It seems NARA at St. Louis is covering up the fact that someone has given Medals to a Movie Star who in fact is not deserving of said medals. The question is why? Is it incompetence or something much worse?"

My email reply back to you on April 8, 2014 at 8:33 a.m. informed you we were not covering anything up and that the delay was due to having to review extensive record material to determine PFC Durning's experiences and assignments while serving in the Army, as well as due to several conversations with the Army to seek additional documentation and or clarification into this matter. I'm happy to say this process has been completed.

As you may know, the Durning military personnel file was destroyed in the 1973 NPRC Fire. Documentation about his military service is very limited. After an extensive review of morning reports, we have attempted to reconstruct the timeline of Durning's military service. However, despite our best efforts, we were not able to provide a detailed breakdown of Mr. Durning's entire service history. The timeline is shown in the attachment. Highlights of our review of the Durning record material include:

- He entered military service on 1/20/43 and was discharged on 1/30/46. He was awarded an Honorable Discharge.
- He did not participate in the D-Day landings, and arrived at Normandy after June 6th. He was wounded by shrapnel from a land mine on 6/17/44. He subsequently spent considerable time recovering from these wounds. He was returned to active service in December 1944.
- For the majority of his time in service Durning was not classified as a Rifleman (MOS 745), rather as a Gunner, Machine AA (MOS 606). The earliest incident of him being classified as a Rifleman which we could locate is 9/12/45, after the war had concluded.

The award of the Silver Star is indicated on Durning's separation document. However, we could not locate a general order awarding him the Silver Star. That is not to say it was not awarded, but we could not locate this among the listing of Silver Star awards for World War II.

Regarding the BSM, the response you received from the NPRC dated December 30, 2013 provided the rationale for award of the BSM. However, after reviewing this information and after discussions with the Army, the award of the BSM should not have been awarded based on the information obtained from his reconstructed record and our organizational records search. The second paragraph cites the criteria for the BSM to include authorization of the Combat Infantry Badge. The paragraph goes on to state that because During was a rifleman (MOS 745) and injured at Normandy on 29 June 1944 he was entitled to the BSM. However, During was not a Rifleman in June 1944 and his injuries from the land mine shrapnel (which occurred on 6/15/44, not 6/29/44), was while serving as a Gunner (MOS 606).

Regarding your desire to correct the tombstone of Mr. During at Arlington, that is a matter you should discuss with the Army and the Durning family.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me via email at bryan.mcgraw@nara.gov or at 314-801-9132.

Sincerely,



BRYAN K. MCGRAW
Access Coordinator & Director,
National Archives at St. Louis

Atch:
During timeline

BKM/bkm

Attachment 1

TIMELINE – Charles Durning (SN 32726378) Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) and Morning Report data

Unless indicated the entries are based upon copies of OMPF/Medical documents received from the VA Claim file at Claim Number 09-230-802. Entries marked **(M/R)** are based on morning report entries.

1/20/43 – Inducted

1/27/43 – Entry on active duty

5/23/44 (M/R) – From 386th AAA Bn (AW) Battery C transferred to 17th Replacement Depot with 11 other EM

6/7/44 (M/R) – 17th Replacement Depot Morning report order showing unit 06E. Durning on list to be assigned to 118th AAA Gun Bn if needed.

6/15/44 – WIA – Shrapnel Land mine

6/15/44 – 24th Evacuation Hospital

6/17/44 – 217th General Hospital

6/22/44 – 76th General Hospital – WIA operation for shrapnel

6/22 – 6/23/44 – Progress notes – eligible for Purple Heart

6/22 – 6/27/44 – Temperature, pressure, respiration notes – Ward A-4

6/28/44 – Transferred to 1st General Hospital

6/28/44 – 122nd General Hospital

6/28 – 6/29/44 – X-Ray request and report

7/3/44 – Urinalysis and blood work Kington Hospital #1

7/10 – 7/21/44 – Nursing notes

7/12/44 – Operation – 5th finger, right

7/12/44 – request culture – shrapnel in 5th finger

7/18 – 8/3/44 – Surgery recovery notes

7/28 – 7/29/44 – Consultation request and report

7/30 – 8/3/44 – Temperature notes – nursing

9/4/44 – Routine exam 122nd General Hospital

9/4/44 – Dental exam

9/8/44 – Admitted 77th station Hospital – Reconditioning Center #1

9/15/44 – Wounds healed but sensitive

9/18/44 – Issued Purple Heart per General Order #3 HQ 122nd General Hospital dated 6/29/44 at 77th Station Hospital

9/22/44 – No complaints or disabilities

9/29/44 – Patient has pain in right knee

10/6/44 – General assignment – man fit for full duty

10/17/44 – History Ward 65 – “Dancing at casino in Birmingham - picked partner over head – sharp pain right groin”.

10/19/44 – Admitted infirmary – possible hernia

12/6/44 – Man physically fit for full field duty, able to walk 12 miles without pack

12/12/44 – Duty transferred 10th RCD

12/12/44 (M/R) – 10th Replacement Depot Order – Exhibit “P” Number 509 – attached unassigned to 322nd Replacement Company – Det 49

12/18/44 (M/R) – Detachment #49 GFRS (Ground Force Replacement Section?) – Durning is listed as one of 11EM transferred to 12th Replacement Depot

12/19/44 (M/R) – HQ 12th Replacement Depot Special Order 270 Attached unassigned GFRS (Detachment 101 GFRS) 374th Replacement Center

12/20/44 (M/R) – 12th Replacement depot, Transfer Order 175 – Transfer to HQ GFRS and will proceed on or about 12/22/44 to whatever unit CG (Commanding General), HQ GFRS indicates

Replacement Company X176A – note: Durning still listed as MOS 606 (Gunner, Machine (AA)) in CAC (AA) (Coast Artillery Corps Antiaircraft Artillery)

New Information from ARR Researcher follows:

1/12/45 (M/R) – Battery B 385th AAA AW Bn (Semimobile) CAC – Durning assigned and joined this unit from HQ 9th Depot MCO 162 per Para 1 Special Order #3 HQ 385 AAA AW Bn (not attached) – MOS is 606 (Gunner, Machine (AA)) - not 745 (Rifleman)

2/22/45 (M/R) – Battery A 385th AAAAW Bn (Semimobile) CAC – Durning is one of 15 EM released from Assignment and transferred to the 16th REINF (Reinforcement) Depot per Para 5 Special Order #44 HQ IX ADC (Air Defense Command) dated 13 Feb 45 (not attached)

(Cannot follow further from here – pick up late in 1945 by going backwards from end of year)

7/31/45 (M/R) – 20th Special Service Company, Durning is one of 21 EM placed on TDY (Temporary Duty) with 20th Special Service Company by 159th Infantry, 106th Division per Special Order #166, HQ 106th Infantry Division, dated 25 July 45 – no copy filmed. Cannot find Durning in any of the units of the 159th; of the 21 men, can find entries for 15.

9/12/45 (M/R) – Service Company, 398th Infantry Regiment – Durning – assigned on 11th from the 159th Infantry Regiment per paragraph 1, Special order #149, HQ 159th Infantry, (date not shown) not joined, TD (temporary duty) 20th Special Service Company, 7th Army. MOS shown as 745 (Rifleman)

11/18/45 (M/R) – Service Company, 398th Infantry Regiment – TD (temporary Duty) 20th Special Service Company, 7th Army to duty

11/27/45 (M/R) – Service Company, 398th Infantry Regiment – Duty to Sick LD (Line of Duty) Clearing Station, 325th Medical Battalion

11/30/45 (M/R) – Service Company, 398th Infantry Regiment – (Correction 28 Nov 45) – Sick LD Clearing Station, 325th Medical Battalion to Duty (Should Be) Sick LD Clearing Station, 325th Medical Battalion to duty as of 29 Nov 45

(last Durning Morning Report entry 398th Infantry Regiment)

1/8/46 – Departed ETO (European Theater of Operations)

1/24/46 – Arrived USA

1/30/46 – separated Fort Dix, NJ