

To Whom It May Concern:

Starting in 2013 I have been in contact with Arlington National Cemetery and St. Louis about the Headstone of Charles Durning and the incorrect information on it.

It was partially corrected by the end of 2013 but it was still wrong. I have attached a letter from St. Louis stating that Durning was not entitled to the Bronze Star or the Silver Star. I have attached 5 pages from the July Letter and added the original Headstone, the one currently at Arlington and what it should look like now that St. Louis has agreed with my findings back in 2013.

I am sending this to three people associated with the Headstone at Arlington and Durning that I have dealt with back then. I sent an email back in August and never heard back so 6 months down the road I am sending this to as many people as possible to get this corrected.

I look forward to hearing that this matter will finally be corrected.

Thanks you,

Brian N. Siddall

January 18, 2015



## *National Archives at St. Louis*

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*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 6<sup>th</sup>. 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 Durning was a rifleman (MOS 745) and injured at Normandy on 29 June 1944 he was entitled to the BSM. However, Durning 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. Durning 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](mailto: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 386<sup>th</sup> AAA Bn (AW) Battery C transferred to 17<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot with 11 other EM

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

6/15/44 – WIA – Shrapnel Land mine

6/15/44 – 24<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital

6/17/44 – 217<sup>th</sup> General Hospital

6/22/44 – 76<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> General Hospital

6/28/44 – 122<sup>nd</sup> 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 – 5<sup>th</sup> finger, right

7/12/44 – request culture – shrapnel in 5<sup>th</sup> 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 122<sup>nd</sup> General Hospital

9/4/44 – Dental exam

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

9/15/44 – Wounds healed but sensitive

9/18/44 – Issued Purple Heart per General Order #3 HQ 122<sup>nd</sup> General Hospital dated 6/29/44 at 77<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> RCD

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

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

12/20/44 (M/R) – 12<sup>th</sup> 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 385<sup>th</sup> AAA AW Bn (Semimobile) CAC – Durning assigned and joined this unit from HQ 9<sup>th</sup> 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 385<sup>th</sup> AAAAW Bn (Semimobile) CAC – Durning is one of 15 EM released from Assignment and transferred to the 16<sup>th</sup> 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) – 20<sup>th</sup> Special Service Company, Durning is one of 21 EM placed on TDY (Temporary Duty) with 20<sup>th</sup> Special Service Company by 159<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 106<sup>th</sup> Division per Special Order #166, HQ 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, dated 25 July 45 – no copy filmed. Cannot find Durning in any of the units of the 159<sup>th</sup>; of the 21 men, can find entries for 15.

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

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

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

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

**(last Durning Morning Report entry 398<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment)**

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

1/24/46 – Arrived USA

1/30/46 – separated Fort Dix, NJ



RAYMOND  
EARL  
CHACE  
TSGT  
US AIR FORCE  
WORLD WAR II  
MAR 26 1922  
JUN 18 2006



CHARLES E  
DURNING  
PFC  
US ARMY  
WORLD WAR II  
FEB 28 1923  
DEC 24 2012  
SILVER STAR  
BRONZE STAR  
PH & 2 OLC



JAMES  
PHILLIP  
SMITH  
US ARMY

CHARLES E. DURNING



CHARLES E  
DURNING

PFC

US ARMY

WORLD WAR II

FEB 28 1923

DEC 24 2012

SILVER STAR

BRONZE STAR

PURPLE HEART





CHARLES E  
DURNING

PFC

US ARMY

WORLD WAR II

FEB 28 1923

DEC 24 2012

PURPLE HEART