



"OLD ABE"

"YOUNG ABE"

The 101st's insignia, the head of an American eagle on a black shield, has an interesting history, and the Division rightfully can be called the Eagle Division, for in the Civil War the Eighth Wisconsin Regiment took into battle its American eagle mascot Old Abe. Old Abe was engaged in 28 battles during the war, and during fire-fights he would fly at the end of his tether screeching and screaming as only an eagle can. The brigade of which his regiment was a part became known as the "Eagle Brigade," and in upholding its honor Old Abe was wounded twice. His perch both in and out of battle was an American shield; it was natural for it to become the background for the famous insignia.

The original Old Abe was captured in Wisconsin by a Chippewa Indian in 1861. He was traded for a bag of corn and sometime afterwards a Mr. Mills, who paid \$5.00 for him, gave him as a mascot to Company "C," Eighth Wisconsin Regiment. This Company became known as the "Eau Claire Eagles," and the name Abe was given the eagle in honor of President Lincoln. During the Civil War organizations on both sides had mascots, but Old Abe was the only eagle. He became so famous that several Confederate commanders offered rewards for him, dead or alive. Despite his wounds Old Abe lived to the venerable age of 21, and his declining years were spent in quarters assigned him in the Wisconsin State Capitol. After his death his carcass was mounted and adorned a perch in the G.A.R. Memorial Hall. A fire in 1904 destroyed the hall and all that remained of Old Abe.

"Young Abe" who became the mascot of the 101st Airborne Division was captured in the same section of the Wisconsin wilds as was Old Abe, and there are those who claim, because of almost identical markings, that Young Abe was a direct descendant of his famous Civil War forbear. Young Abe lost his freedom when only a few weeks old in July 1899. His captor, Louis Jarvis of Rhinelander, sent him to the state game farm. Here he remained until sent to Fort Bragg to become the 101st's mascot in November 1942.

Young Abe was "inducted" and had a Service Record to prove it. In colorful ceremonies at Ft. Bragg in 1942 Young Abe was presented to the colors and the division passed in review for him. The ceremony went out to the public over the coast-to-coast network of the Mutual Broadcasting system. The division's adjutant general read a special order of the day recognizing Young Abe as a bonafide member of the division, and Maj. Gen. Wm. C. Lee delivered a speech of acknowledgment and acceptance. It is said in the midst of flashing camera bulbs, military music and marching troops Young Abe conducted himself in a most commendable manner and seemed anxious to perform for newswired cameramen who were on hand.

Young Abe's Service Record shows him to have been "inducted" at Portage, Wisconsin and that he was sent to the Fort Bragg Reception center. Originally his ASN was 33555553, but this was appropriately changed to 101010101. On October 24, 1942 he was examined for fleas and lice with negative results. He was 2 feet 10 inches tall and weighed 25 pounds; eyes, black; hair, white; complexion rusty. His marital status was unknown, but his occupation was listed as "warrior" and in case of emergency any 101st soldier was to have been notified. While the defects were waived because of exemplary warlike character, his service record did note he had two toes missing, one on each foot. A clothing account was opened for Young Abe, and his Service record notes his initial issue consisted of collar, chain and cage. It was authorized that appropriate rations be issued him for separate messing commencing October 20, 1942, the date of his transfer from the 221st Child Field Artillery Battalion to Division Headquarters.

Because his home address and names of nearest relatives were unknown M.-Sgt. John W. Griffith was designated as Young Abe's beneficiary. He was rated as; character, excellent; and efficiency, superior. There was no monetary obligation but it was noted there was due from him the same kind of duty performance rendered by his predecessor, Old Abe. The cause of his death on July 6, 1943 was unknown, but he was buried with honor.