



# ★THE LAST★ **HERO**

FORGOTTEN TODAY, EDOUARD V.M. IZAC WAS THE LAST SURVIVING MEDAL OF HONOR HOLDER FROM THE GREAT WAR

BY LELAND HEGGE

**O**n 18 January 1990, Edouard Victor Michel Izac quietly died in his sleep. Today, his name is virtually unrecognized and the same was true when he passed some 36 years ago. However, having lived nearly 100 years, Izac was an exceptional man and had established himself as a professional in several fields.

Among his many accomplishments, Izac was also the last living Medal of Honor recipient from the Great War.

Born on 18 December 1881 in the small farming community of Cresco, Iowa, he was the youngest of nine children. (Cresco, in case you were wondering, is home to the Wrestling Hall of Fame of Iowa.) His dad was Balthazar Izac and he built sturdy farm wagons to support his large family while mother Mathilda took care of the brood.

This father had emigrated to the USA from the German Imperial Territory of Alsace-Lorraine during 1852 and this was due to the political instability caused by Napoleon III's *coup d'état*. This region was officially ceded to the German Empire in the Treaty of Frankfurt. French resentment about the loss of the land was one of the contributing factors leading to the Great War. His mother came from Philadelphia but her family had immigrated from Baden-Wurttemberg in Germany. As typical of the time, immigration officials changed Izac's last name to Isaacs when Balthazar entered the USA. This was a very common practice and all his children would go along with the last name of Isaacs — all except for Edouard who refused to change his name and kept Izac even though the rest of his family protested the fact.

The Isaacs were a tight-knit group and enjoyed their time together. All the children were industrious and, as soon as they were able, they began undertaking outside jobs in order to add more money to the family "pot." In the home and around the dinner table, they all spoke the Alsatian dialect German while Edouard would go a step further and master the French language. These facts would have a great deal of importance



Izac's first assignment was aboard the USS Florida.



Colorized postcard of Abraham Lincoln in German service.  
later in his life.

Cresco was a small town with a population of around 3000 and educational opportunities did not abound. Edouard attended the School of the Assumption, a small institution located downtown. He saw that high schools in South St. Paul, Minnesota, offered a better chance at a more secure future so, somehow, he moved to that town and registered at a high school. He desired a college education but realistically knew that was well out of the financial reach of his family.

It seemed that the United States Naval Academy offered what he wanted and he began a letter writing campaign in an attempt to find support since he soon discovered that private colleges frowned on his "farm" background along with his lack of finances. A democratic



Lieutenant (junior grade) Edouard Izac aboard Abraham Lincoln.

LEFT: World War One era portrait of Lt. Izac.