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WELL DESERVED—William B. Cruise, of Passaic, gets the Medal of Freedom for more than three years work as director of a Red Cross club for G.I.'s in London. At the left is Lt. J. Edgar I. Upright and at the right, George Zane, both are with the Passaic recruiting office of the army. (Herald-News Photo.)

Bill Cruise Honored by Army For Red Cross Work in London

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A civilian had a medal today and his even the most battle-weary, most cynical, most ribbon-wary ex-G.I. would say it was not well deserved.

The decoration was the Medal of Freedom presented yesterday by army officers to William B. Cruise—the grinning Bill Cruise who made the Red Cross Motory Club a home in London to more than a thousand North Jersey G.I.'s.

Mr. Cruise received the medal at a special, restricted meeting of school officials and directors of Passaic Chapter, American Red Cross, in a small room at the Passaic Avenue headquarters.

Veterans who saw Bill Cruise at work would know this was a tactical error by someone in the War Department, which presented the medal.

Reminds November 8
The honor should have been bestowed November 8 at the annual reunion of Motory Club "alumni" at the Hotel New Yorker, "alumni" would say. The former doughboys and Eighth Air Force men would explain Bill should have received it where his boys could have seen him honored for the three years of work he put in for them, where they could raise a glass and sing his praises.

The former riflemen and gunners and grown monkeys would know best the full meaning of the rather cold words of his citation, read yesterday, which mentioned "exceptionally meritorious achievement."

They would know it meant they could find the grinning little man around the big, drafty Motory Club in 24 hours a day.

They would know it meant they were feeling they had experienced something in out of back and first-class nights, to have someone grab their hand and remember their names and even know how badly they failed mathematics in Passaic Memorial School five or ten years before. For Bill Cruise had known many of the men while a Passaic school official, and he had a knack of remembering names.

Indefatigable Energy
The one-time life and code clerks and ask ask men, would know the War Department was just beating a hollow drum when it wrote into the citation of his indefatigable energy, complete understanding of the needs of the American soldiers and a whole-hearted interest in their welfare.

And they would know the words weren't hollow, either, when the citation added "without regard for his own comfort...he worked tirelessly, maintaining communications with mothers and other relatives of those enjoying hospitality of the club and creating the atmosphere of an American home."

The former armorer and typist and basket man would also know the War Department meant every word of it when they concluded the citation with the declaration that Bill Cruise "materially contributed to the high state of morale among the troops."

Presented by Major
The citation was presented by Major George Zane, commanding officer of army and air force recruiting in Passaic and Bergen Counties.

Bill Zane said the award was recommended by Gen. Joseph P. McNarney, commander of the European Theatre of Operations during the war. The citation covers Mr. Cruise's service from October 2, 1943 to May 1, 1945. He served in London until the following October, after V-E Day.

Mr. Cruise, now principal of Passaic School No. 8, was the first Red Cross director to organize reunions at clubs for G.I.'s from various cities and states.

His "Passaic Night" dinners always attracted large groups of Passaic and Bergen men and women, many of whom came several hundred miles to London for the event from clubs in Scotland.

One of Largest Clubs
His Motory Club, one of the largest of a score of Red Cross clubs in London, was first on Portman Square and later moved to Edgeware Road. Both were in the West End of London, centers of American activities in London during the war.

Present at yesterday's presentation was Albert Gregg of Montclair, former of a Passaic clean factory. Mr. Gregg was Mr. Cruise's chief in London, as deputy commissioner of Red Cross for the city.

In accepting the citation and medal, Mr. Cruise said he regretted the ceremony could not be attended by his sister, Miss Ella Cruise, who is back as a Red Cross worker in Germany, after a leave here.

Mr. John Clendinning was chairman of yesterday's program. The Medal of Freedom was authorized by the War Department in 1942. It is presented to civilians attached to the Army who did outstanding work.

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