

Edouard Victor Michel Issacs (Izac)



Photo # NH 103348 Lieutenant Edouard Victor Michel Issacs, USN

Edouard Issacs was born on December 18th, 1891, to Bathazar Izac and Mathilda Geuth in Cresco, Iowa. His father immigrated from Alsace-Lorraine in 1852 due to political instability; his last name was changed by immigration from Izac to Issacs upon arrival in the United States. Edouard was the youngest of nine children and the only one to use the Izac spelling. He first attended the School of the Assumption in Cresco, Iowa. Then he moved to a high school in South Saint Paul, Minnesota. On May 6th, 1911, he was appointed as Midshipman, 4th class in the Naval Academy, where he met his wife Agnes Cabell at a dance. He worked his way up to Midshipman 1st class in 1915, the same year he graduated and got married.

After graduation, Edouard was promoted to lieutenant junior grade and assigned to the battleship U.S.S. Florida. His daughter Cabell was born in 1916. In 1917 he was transferred to the U.S.S. President Lincoln for troop transport. By the fifth voyage of the U.S.S. President Lincoln, Edouard had been promoted to executive officer. On May 31st, 1918, while returning to New York from Brest, France, the U.S.S. President Lincoln was hit by three torpedoes by a German submarine U-90. The Captain, Commander P.W. Foote, ordered the ship abandoned; 26 men in a crew of 700 were killed. Edouard survived the attack but was captured and taken as a prisoner of war.

Edouard was treated well as a prisoner and even played cards with the crew of the U-boat. He kept his ability to speak German a secret so that he could gain intelligence for the U.S. Navy. He studied the interior of the submarine, which was superior to U.S. Submarines at the time. He was transferred multiple times and made numerous escape attempts. On October 6th, 1918, he and a group of American prisoners were successful in escaping by dressing as guards and cutting the power. They hiked the long route to the Swiss border to avoid detection by dogs and successfully reached the American Embassy on October 13th, 1918. They traveled to Paris and then to London, and finally to the Bureau of Navigation on November 11th, 1918.

A few months after his return Edouard was promoted to Lieutenant Commander and assigned as the Director of Munitions at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. He was also awarded the Medal of Honor on November 11th, 1920, as well as the Italian Croce di Guerra and the Cross of Montenegro. His Naval career ended soon after due to the numerous injuries that he sustained during his escape attempts.

After his retirement, he changed his legal last name to Izac and moved his family to San Diego, California, to pursue journalism. He then dove into the world of politics and ran unsuccessfully for U.S. Congress in 1934. From 1937 to 1947, he was the Representative for California's 20th district. After he lost the election in 1946, he moved to a farm in Gordonsville, Virginia. He died on January 18th, 1990, of congestive heart failure in Fairfax, Virginia, and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.