The Orders and Medals Society of America

After Abrams - with Cohen alongside him - spearheaded the force that relieved the encircled 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, General Patton took a special interest in Cohen's fighting ability. He was so impressed with Cohen's aggressive spirit and combat skills that he chose Cohen to lead a "special" mission to rescue Patton's son-in-law, then held by the Germans in a prisoner of war camp in Hammelburg. After Patton's aide told Cohen to prepare "for a dangerous mission," he asked Cohen what he wanted—-to which Cohen replied: "Five cartons of Camels'; I was a smoker at the time." When the time came for the mission to begin, however, Cohen was in the hospital getting treatment for hemorrhoids and was unable to lead the expedition. That hospitalization probably saved his life.4 After Abrams informed Patton that Cohen was too sick to go, Cohen's Battalion Operations Officer, Major Baum, went instead. The mission was a failure. Many men were killed and Baum was taken prisoner; Patton's son-in-law was wounded but did survive the war.

On April 1, 1945, Colonel Cohen was in a field hospital getting treatment for hemorrhoids when elements of the Sixth SS Mountain Division overran the hospital. The Germans didn't know who Cohen was at first, but they did search his clothing, and found a letter from his mother, addressed "Lt. Col. Harold Cohen, 254 APO New York." Cohen's shoelaces were removed from his boots so that he couldn't run away. Fortunately, the Germans decided to allow the hospital to continue in operation. They marched it into the next town, where it set up again and began treating both German and American wounded. By the next day American forces had come to the rescue, so Cohen's captivity was brief.

While in the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion,5 Harold Cohen was awarded four Silver Stars,6 three Bronze Stars,7 and three Purple Hearts.8 Addition-

4 Telephone conversation with Harold Cohen, 2 May 1996.
5 Cohen gave up command on 19 April 1945, returned home on 29 October 1945, and was separated on 21 December 1945.
6 The Silver Star awards are GO 93, Hq, 4th Arm Div, 5 Dec 1944; GO 16, Hq, 4th Arm Div, 16 Jan 1945 (1st OLC; GO 26, Hq, 4th Arm Div, 4 Feb 1945 (2nd OLC); GO 73, Hq, 4th Arm Div, 30 Apr 1945 (3rd OLC).
7 The Bronze Stars are GO 19, Hq, 4th Arm Div, 26 Aug 1944; GO 48, Hq, 4th Arm Div, 13 Mar 1945 (1st OLC)
8 GO 5, Hq, 4th Arm Div, 16 Nov 44; GO 3, Hq, 4th Arm Div, 9 Jan 45 (1st OLC); GO 5, HQ, 4th Arm Div, 12 Jan 45 (2nd OLC).
ally, on 10 September 1945, several months after the end of the war in Europe, Harold Cohen was recommended for the DSC. The proposed citation, signed by Capt. Tomas Diamantes, Battalion Executive Officer, reads:

For extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy on 25 February 1945 near Brecht, Germany.

When the situation became untenable during his battalion's attack upon Brecht, Germany, because of small arms, artillery and direct fire that came from all directions, Lieutenant Colonel Cohen took a position on high ground in plain view of the enemy and oblivious to all danger and constant fire that fell all about him directed tank fire, lifted friendly artillery fire that was falling too close and by personal bravery, inspiring leadership and tactical skill retained the initiative and gained the important objective. His actions are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Military Service.

Accompanying the proposed citation is a more lengthy narrative, which elaborates on Cohen's conduct as follows:

Personally leading a platoon of tanks, he directed their fire upon the enemy...he acted like a man possessed as he directed artillery fire on the town that was his objective and while in an absolutely exposed position located enemy positions and directed fire on all such locations.

On 26 September 1945, Maj. Gen. F. B. Prickett, commander, 4th Armored Division, recommended approval. On 29 September 1945, the XII Corps commander, now Maj. Gen. Prickett, recommended approval at his level. The proposed award of the Distinguished Service Cross now had only to go to the Commanding General, 3d Army, for approval. Documents in Cohen's file at St. Louis reflect receipt of the "endorsements" from lower headquarters on 1 October 1945. For some unexplained reason, however, no action was taken on the decoration.

In March 1996, while discussing General Abrams with Lewis Sorley, Sorley told this author the story of Harold Cohen. He mentioned in passing that Cohen had been recommended for the DSC more than 50 years ago, and asked if something could be done about obtaining the award for Cohen, even at this late date.
Under US law and Army regulations, provided a recommendation for an award has been made within a two-year period from the date of the act of gallantry or service, that recommendation is considered to be timely, and may be acted upon.

Consequently, the author took the documents recommending the Distinguished Service Cross, prepared a cover letter requesting immediate consideration, and hand-carried it to the US Army Total Army Personnel Command in Alexandria, Virginia.

Harold Cohen (left) and the author (right) after Cohen received his Distinguished Service Cross from General Dennis J. Reimer, Army Chief of Staff, on May 9, 1996.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AUTHORIZED BY CONGRESS
HAS AWARDED
THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS
TO
LIEUTENANT COLONEL HAROLD COHEN, UNITED STATES ARMY, RETIRED
THEN MAJOR UNITED STATES ARMY
FOR
EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM IN ACTION
ON 26 FEBRUARY 1945
GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
[signature]
[signature]
[signature]

The award document presented to Harold Cohen.