Zachary B. Friedenbert letter
MSS 383
Chrissie Perella.

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Born in New York City on April 12, 1915, Zachary B. Friedenberg graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University in 1939. He served in World War II as a surgeon in the 95th Evacuation Hospital, an advanced army field hospital, in North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany and participated in three D-day landings. He was honored with the European Theater Ribbon, the Meritorious Service Unit Plaque, and the American Defense Service Medal. After his military experience, he went to the University of Pennsylvania, where he trained as an orthopaedic resident and fellow from 1945 to 1949. He then joined the faculty, where he attained the rank of full professor in 1970. In 1955, he was elected as a Fellow to The College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Friedenberg was married to his wife, Kathleen, for over 30 years. They had two children. He died January 27, 2011, in Bryn Mawr, PA. This small collection consists of a single letter, written by Zachary B. Friedenberg in January 1944, while he was serving as a surgeon in the 95th Evacuation Hospital during World War II. Researchers interested in
the experiences of a World War II surgeon will find the letter rich in detail and emotion.

Biography/History

Born in New York City on April 12, 1915, Zachary B. Friedenberg graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University in 1939.

Following an internship at Kings County Hospital, New York City, Friedenberg served in World War II as a surgeon in the 95th Evacuation Hospital, an advanced army field hospital, in North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany and participated in three D-day landings. He was honored with the European Theater Ribbon, the Meritorious Service Unit Plaque, and the American Defense Service Medal.

After his military experience, he went to the University of Pennsylvania, where he trained as an orthopaedic resident and fellow from 1945 to 1949. He then joined the faculty, where he attained the rank of full professor in 1970. He was also chief of orthopaedic surgery at Presbyterian Medical Center and Chester County Hospital, and maintained a private practice. In 1955, he was elected as a Fellow to The College of Physicians of Philadelphia.

While at Penn, Friedenberg was an early researcher in the electrical healing of bone fractures by direct current stimulation, and was a co-author of many papers on this and a multitude of other subjects. He taught many medical students, interns and residents, and set up the Clinician Scientist Award of the Orthopedic Research and Education Foundation, designed to assist practicing surgeons in devoting time to research. In 2002, he played a prominent part in the development of a film produced by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, entitled Wounded in Action. The film documents the role of orthopedic surgeons in World War II and is part of an art exhibit of the same name that celebrates those who served. He was also instrumental in the development of the documentary, A Legacy of Heroes.

He published numerous books on medical history, including The Doctor in Colonial America, Medicine Under Sail; Hospital at War: The 95th Evacuation Hospital in World War II; Surgery Over The Centuries; and Magic, Miracles, and Medicine, published in late 2010.

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Scope and Contents

This small collection consists of a single letter, written by Zachary B. Friedenberg in January 1944, while he was serving as a surgeon in the 95th Evacuation Hospital during World War II. Researchers interested in the experiences of a World War II surgeon will find the letter rich in detail and emotion. The College received this letter as donation from Friedenberg in 1995, who described it as such:

"This letter of 1944, was returned to me after 51 years, in March 1995. It was sent to my parents in New York in 1944, typed, and a copy sent to my uncle. After his death in Brookline, Massachusetts, his daughter, in sorting out old correspondence, recognized it and returned it to me.

It recalls my experiences as a military surgeon prior to and during the invasion of Anzio, Italy, during World War II. Names of places and units, of course, could not be mentioned in a letter during military operations.

The 95th Evacuation Hospital, after service in North Africa and Southern Italy, was called upon to support the Anzio invasion, and sailed from Naples in January, 1944.

The Hospital was struck by aerial bombs, with many casualties, and replaced by another hospital in Anzio, while the remaining personnel were returned to Naples. The last two paragraphs were written in Naples."

Administrative Information

Historical Medical Library of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia
Chrissie Perella.

Processing Information

This collection was discovered during a survey in the summer and fall of 2015. It was processed in the spring of 2018.
Related Materials

United States Army 95th Evacuation Hospital reports, MSS 387 (1944-1945)
Zachary Friedenberg, Hospital at war: the 95th Evacuation Hospital in World War II, 2004.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- United States. Army. Evacuation Hospital, 95th

Form/Genre(s)

- Correspondence

Subject(s)

- Anzio, Battle of, Anzio, Italy, 1944
- Bombing, Aerial
- Surgeons -- World War, 1939-1945