

IN KANSAS

House Moving Restored and Sustains This Decorated Veteran

by Nelda Ream & Jack Edwards

At the age of 12, Irvin Ream started his first business—cutting hair. A short time later as a teenager, he learned the art of moving houses while working for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in northern Arizona. It was a natural for him as his father was a blacksmith, and young Irvin had learned the trade. The smell and shrill sound of hot metal being pounded into form on an anvil turned out to be more therapeutic than an occupation.

In the meantime, Ream rented and operated a Texaco service station, purchased a ranch and spent a lot of time in a neighborhood gymnasium where he learned the



Ream, (left) very athletic, played baseball while in the CCC.

sport of boxing. In fact, at the age of 20, he was known as the "Oklahoma Kid."

It was 1938 and a war was raging in Europe. One day on a trip to Oklahoma City, he met a group of friends who had just enlisted in the Marine Corps. They invited Irvin to join them but there was a problem. He only had two names but the military required three. After remembering his mother indicating she had almost named him after her favorite uncle John, the problem disappeared. Because of his excellent physical condition the recruiting officer gave Irvin a physical, which he easily passed, added John to his name and young John Irvin Ream was off the next day on his first train ride to San Diego for basic training, but would ultimately arrive in the South Pacific where he encountered the savagery of war and ended up "left for dead" on the battlefield..

The Oklahoma Kid, who had been selected for special duty because he was the only Marine to complete a 180-mile training trek in basic training without falling out while carrying one hundred pounds of equipment and a rifle on his back was scarred, beat and broken, but not out. Repeated bouts with malaria in Guadalcanal and surrounding islands, and the loss of friends, including members of



The "Oklahoma Kid" taking part in competition fun during the 1930's while in the Civilian Conservation Corp.

the platoon ...

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