

Everett L. Hobbs, Jr. and  
The Abraham Lincoln Brigade  
in the Spanish Civil War

by Judy Darland

The Spanish Civil War was fought from 17 July 1936 to 1 April 1939 between the Republicans, who were loyal to the democratically elected Spanish Republic, and the Nationalists, a rebel movement lead by General Francisco Franco. Later, it was widely seen as a prelude to World War II.



To help the cause of Spanish freedom and democracy, the Republicans asked for volunteer fighters from all over the world. Americans began volunteering and arriving in Spain in 1937. Their numbers would eventually swell to 2,800, about one third of whom would die there. The Lincoln Battalion was organized in January 1937 as part of the XVth International Brigade. The Lincoln Battalion initially fielded three companies, two infantry and one machine gun and consisted of men from every part of the United States, Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Canada, Hawaii and the Philippines. Included were sections of Latin American and Irish volunteers, organized as the Centuria Guttieras and the Connolly Column, respectively. After less than two months of training, the Lincolns went into action in February 1937.

In 1935 and 1936, my great-uncle Everett L. Hobbs, Jr. was still exploring options for his future. He worked on ocean-going freighters and steam tankers and had the opportunity to see countries like Brazil, Japan and Mexico, to name a few. After arriving in New York on 26 September 1936, he heard of the conflict in Spain. He connected with other interested volunteers as they began to organize. In New York they bought uniforms in the army-navy surplus stores. Because it was illegal to fight in a foreign war, they disguised themselves as tourists and left New York aboard the S.S. Normandie on 26 December 1936. The ship docked in France where the men took a train to the base of the Pyrenees Mountains. From there, the Americans trekked through the mountains until they reached Catalonia where a headquarters had been set up. They gave themselves the name of Abraham Lincoln Brigade. They were quickly whipped into shape and prepared for battle.



The first call for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade was in February 1937 in what was to be called the Battle of Jarama. As the Brigade was being transporting, two trucks took a wrong turn and accidentally drove into enemy lines on 16 February 1937. All of the men, including Everett Hobbs, were killed and the records they were carrying with them were lost.

No one in my family ever spoke about my great-uncle Everett and I knew little about him when I began researching this side of my mother's family, and what I have found is precious little. While researching the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, I discovered that the members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA) were having a memorial service in February 2015 at Jarama, Spain for those who were lost. One of the members asked if I would like to submit some information about Everett that would be read at the service. So for this forgotten young man, I wrote a Eulogy:

Everett L. Hobbs, Jr. (1913 – 1937)



Shortly after you were born in 1913, your mother died and you never had a chance to know her. Your father became sullen after her death and maybe even blamed you for his loss. He remarried and had another son and took you and them to Southern California in 1923, leaving behind your two adult sisters to fend for themselves.

I can only imagine that your childhood was less than idyllic; your step-mother died two years later and her sister stayed with your father to help raise you and your brother.

You graduated from high school in 1929, and 4 years later you were engaged to be married, but never did. Within another year or so you left California and worked as a seaman out of New York. You were able to visit Japan and Mexico and presumably other countries as well.

And then you heard what was going on in Spain. You were one of the first Americans to volunteer. You were also one of the first to die.

I can only hope you found some sort of contentment in your travels and in the friends you made along the way. Your memory will never fade away – your brother named his first son after you and I hope to meet him one day.

May you always rest in peace.