

Joseph Giacobello is one of the most highly decorated soldiers in Central Pennsylvania. A life-long resident of Mt. Union, he served gallantly in World War II. He earned the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, two Purple Hearts, and the Combat Infantry Badge while fighting with the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Europe.

After completing his junior year at Shippensburg University (then known as Shippensburg State Teachers College), where he was a standout football and basketball player, Joe was drafted into the Army on June 17, 1942 and assigned to the infantry. He did his basic training at Camp Pickett, Virginia and later went to Officer Candidate School at Ft. Benning, Georgia.

Joe went overseas with the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. He was with Company F, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 137<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. The 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division arrived in Normandy July 5, 1944 and went into action on July 11, fighting in the hedgerows north of St. Lo. On July 13 Lieutenant Giacobello earned his first Silver Star and Purple Heart. During an attack Company F was held up by enemy machine guns firing from a group of houses. Lieutenant Giacobello volunteered to lead a patrol to outflank enemy positions. He crawled along a hedgerow on the right flank and threw eight hand grenades to destroy one enemy position. Though wounded he led his patrol to capture his platoon objective and from there placed fire on enemy positions that permitted the rest of the company to advance.

Soon afterwards Lieutenant Giacobello was placed in command of Company F and he earned another Silver Star on September 11, 1944. His regiment attempted to cross the Moselle River near Crevechamps. With 15 other men of his company Lieutenant Giacobello led an assault squad across a dam of to the east side of the river. Intense fire forced the patrol to take cover behind a retaining wall of the dam. Joe crossed over the wall and maneuvered behind enemy lines and gained valuable information. He was separated from the rest of the troops for 12 hours. When the rest of his squad rejoined him the following day Joe was able to establish communications with the battalion command post and directed the movement of troops to his area thereby securing the bridgehead.

In another incident described in a newspaper article Captain Giacobello led his company in an attack on the village of Hellimer, France on November 21. During this action he and two other soldiers stopped a self propelled 88mm gun and then he knocked out a Panther tank. The following day he was wounded for the second time.

On December 10, 1944 Captain Giacobello earned the Distinguished Service Cross in a fierce battle in Sarreguemines (pronounced Sahr-guh-mean), France against two SS infantry companies. Company F was given the mission of seizing an enemy-held pottery factory on the far side of the Saar River. The city guarded the approaches to the Siegfried Line and the factory itself was the key to the southern and eastern defenses of the city. In the night, the Captain and two enlisted men crossed the river on an improvised plank bridge, assaulted the first machine-gun position and killed the crew. Then, entering the first factory building they killed twelve more of the enemy and assaulted the main building, where for three hours they fought a superior number of the enemy among the factory machines with grenades, pistols, and finally with knives. The enemy set fire to the building, but the men held their ground, and in hand-to-hand combat the fearless Captain killed two of the enemy. When the rest of the company arrived, Captain Giacobello led them against the remaining defenders and completely annihilated them. During this assault, one platoon on the left flank pressured the Germans into retreating into another building on the factory grounds. The Germans were surprised by Company F's right assault platoon that had been ordered by Captain Giacobello to enter the building from the rear. A German counter attack was stopped by the support platoon and then the company launched a counter attack that went from house-to-house and along the way liberated 995 Allied prisoners of war. Company F lost 13 enlisted men wounded. The enemy lost 43 killed, 75 captured, and 26 wounded.

For its outstanding performance in the action against the enemy in Saarguemines, Company F received Battle Honors. It was one of only three infantry companies in the 35<sup>th</sup> Division and the only one in the 137<sup>th</sup> Regiment to be awarded Battle Honors during the course of the war.

On December 12, the 137<sup>th</sup> Infantry entered Germany Later in the month the 35<sup>th</sup> Division took part in the Battle of the Bulge, helping to relieve Bastogne. The Division attacked across the Roer River on February 23 and pierced the Siegfried Line. At this time Captain Giacobello was granted a furlough and sent back to the United States where his assignment was to prepare for the invasion of Japan.

When the war ended Joe was discharged. He followed his father as owner and operator of J.S. Giacobello Distributors in Mt. Union. He is a life member of the Mt. Union American Legion and VFW and is active in the community.