

WW II Veteran Receives His Purple Heart After 70 Years

Robert C Bohm was born October 8, 1920 in Lorraine, Ohio. He lived in Ohio, Illinois, and Iowa growing up and graduated from Muscatine High School in Iowa. On October 29, 1940, he signed up for the US Army.

His first tour was in North Africa and his job was a lineman/communication specialist. One day his troop was given orders that they would be joining forces in Italy. Someone had to be left behind to close down the switchboard, and Bob was selected. Several days later when he caught up to his troop, he found that the previous night their campsite had been bombed and all had perished.

On February 1, 1944, Bob was struck in the head with mortar shell in the Battle of Monte Cassino. He woke up fourteen days later in a military hospital in Naples with no recollection of where he had been the last fourteen days or how he had gotten off of the mountain into Naples. He was told that he would be sent home and would receive his Purple Heart. The Army had even sent a telegram to his parents telling them he was coming home. Instead he was re-assigned to the 591st Boat Engineers, a non-combat troop who protected the Naples harbor.

When he finally returned home after serving four years, nine months, and twenty-eight days, he was honorably discharged at Ft. Sheridan in Illinois. Major Harold Dunn wrote on his separation paper that he was due his Purple Heart.

While waiting for his Purple Heart to come, Bob married his fiancé and love of his life, Jeanne Metzger. He graduated from college and began a life long career as a coach, teacher, and school administrator. Finally after waiting for years, he searched to find out why he had never received his Purple Heart, only to be informed that his records, along with 18 million other veterans' records had been burned in a fire in St. Louis. Every time that he would try through the VA, VFW, and politicians he was told that without these records it would be impossible for him to get his Purple Heart.

In April of 2013, his daughter heard of another WW II veteran who had gotten his Purple Heart with the help of The Order of the Purple Heart. She contacted them and they instructed her as to how to get his DD 214 form corrected.

December 19, 2013 Bob received a letter stating that once again he was denied because there was no proof that his wound was enemy related or that he had been treated in a military hospital for this wound. His daughter re-submitted papers documenting his wound was from battle and where he was treated for the wound. Their congresswoman, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen joined in the fight and wrote letters on Bob's behalf.

June 7, 2014 Bob received another rejection once again stating that without his records that had been burned, it was not possible to get his Purple Heart. His

daughter could not even tell him this news and the next day started searching the internet. She stumbled across an interview for NPR with Four-Star General Peter Chiarelli who has made it his purpose to help soldiers who suffered from brain injuries. His daughter contacted the retired general and sent his medical records proving that Bob indeed had suffered traumatic brain injury, was treated for this wound in a military hospital, and his separation paper showing that the request had been made for his Purple Heart.

Within ten days of General Chiarelli receiving these papers, Bob was notified that he was receiving his Purple Heart. He had waited over 70 years to hear those words. He then received a letter from General Chiarelli that he and his wife, Beth would be honored to be at the ceremony. Then he heard from General David MacEwen who had assisted in expediting the award would also be attending with his wife, Patty. Also attending were Mr. Richard Hunt and his wife, Michelle from the Order of the Purple Heart.

On the evening of August 23, 2014 in a heart warming ceremony Robert C. Bohm was pinned his Purple Heart by General Peter Chiarelli, General David MacEwen, and Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.