

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Proudly Honors



JOE CARL SPECKER

UNITED STATES ARMY

SERGEANT (E-5)

SEPTEMBER 9, 1942 – JANUARY 1944

KILLED IN ACTION JANUARY 7, 1944

as

PURPLE HEART PATRIOT

JULY 2025

Linda Gillis, Honoring Her Great Uncle's Service and Sacrifice

Sponsored by: Gilead Rupe Chapter, NSDAR



Joe Carl Specker was inducted into the Army on September 9, 1942, at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, Missouri. Basic training was at Camp Walters, Texas, followed by combat engineer training at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. He became a member of Company C, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, 1108th Engineer Group. His unit sailed from Staten Island, New York, aboard the USS Edmund Alexander on August 21, 1943, arriving in Ragnoli, Italy, on October 10.

Throughout December, his company, working with Italian civilians, moved north under the cover of smoke at night to remain undetected.

In January 1944, they approached Monte Porchia, a hill in the Apennines of Italy, also known as Purple Heart Valley. They were working as combat engineers, armored engineers, and infantry as German forces were entrenched on the mountainside and firing on all allied soldiers.

On January 6, Joe's unit was tasked to act as infantry to the 6th Armored Infantry, and the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion proceeded up the mountain. Companies A, B, and C set up positions and began to fight.

The next day, Joe volunteered to set up a machine gun to fire on German forces that were firing on his men. As he approached the site he had chosen, he was shot and

fell. He pulled himself up and kept moving, but was unable to walk. He was able to pull himself into place, set up his gun, and fired along the ridge so accurately, most of the enemy soldiers were killed, and the rest retreated. His firing stopped, but his unit thought he was either resting or out of ammunition. The fighting intensified in another area, and his unit was moved to defend that area. Early the next morning, Joe was found dead at his gun, his finger still on the trigger of the machine gun.

In addition to the Purple Heart, Joe was the recipient of the Medal of Honor, an Army Presidential Unit Citation, Good Conduct Medal, World War II American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.

Engineer Port Ship Joe C. Specker was dedicated on January 17, 1945, a road to Rome was named for him by his unit, the Douthit American Legion Post was renamed the Douthit-Specker American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post, in Fort Belvoir, Virginia, was named for him along with several buildings and roads at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and in Colorado. A portion of I-70 was renamed the Joe C. Specker Memorial Highway in 2012.

Joe died three days before his 23rd birthday.