



Private First Class Joseph Casaburi was born and raised in Harlem, New York in December 1921. Drafted in the Army-Air Force, PFC.Casaburi started in Denver as a dental assistant, until he was informed that he needed to leave for Germany. During his deployment, he lost his unit and was outnumbered by about 300 Germans to two. After spotting a house and going in, he hid by going under a bed when Germans soldiers came in to search the house; this went on for 20 minutes, until they finally left the house. Out of all the medals PFC.Casaburi received, the one he is most proud of is the Purple Heart. Check out his podcast on Spotify called “Uncle Joey: The First Hundred Years.”

I was born on December 8th, 1921 and was raised in Harlem, New York. I lived in an apartment with 2 brothers, 3 sisters and parents; 8 of us in one apartment. I'm 100, my brother is 90, my sisters are 93-97 and 2 other brothers fought in the Korean War while I fought WW2. I was the oldest so I was pressed to work early to bring home money; I bought bags for 1 cent and sold them for 2 cents as a kid to raise money for the apartment. Then as I learned a trade I became an upholsterer and I was really good working for many famous clients such as John Lennon and Yoko Ono as well as the White House and President Bush for his wife, Barbara. I worked with the Mellon Family, who were one of the richest families in New York and they flew me to private islands to work as well. I went to school in Harlem, NY, but left early to help make money. My mother got me a drum set for 25 bucks and I taught myself on the roof of my building to play drums, learning every record and playing by ear. I went on to play in the army orchestra after the war in a 25 piece orchestra.

I was drafted in the Army-Air Force and had no choice; you had to go. I was a private and fought alongside Patton's 3rd Army. My rank was Private First Class in the Army-Air force. I started in Denver as a dental assistant and had an easy on until one day, they said you need to leave for Germany tomorrow we need more troops. I never held a gun in my life and I was headed to the front lines to fight. I got trained for about 3 months and then moved to the front lines. I was always constantly afraid of dying and being attacked.

I still have shrapnel in my body from the war and one of my crazy stories was the time that I lost my unit and I was outnumbered by about 300 Germans to two of us. I saw a house on the hill and we separated from each other. When I got to the house I knew I had to hide not because I was afraid, but because I could only kill a certain amount and the rest were certain to kill me. So, I dove under the bed and kept quiet and all the Germans came in to search the house. They sat down on the bed that I was under and started smoking cigarettes and laughing, but they never knew that I was under the bed; if they looked under the bed I would've been killed. This went on for about 20 minutes, but felt like hours until they finally all left the house. At that time, I still waited to make sure and then I got out, searched around, and ran back to my unit. It was a miracle, I was thrown off a tank as well where I got hurt and bombs were going off and gun fire so shrapnel is still in my lower back down my leg.

I did not liberate the concentration camps, but I was near and in the areas so I did help. I lost many friends every day. One time, how far the unit went to the left and half our unit went to the right. I was lucky to go to the left because everybody that went to the right was killed. You would see a guy at lunchtime and then find out later he was dead. You had to stay strong. We were all young, cold, tired and hungry, but you had to keep fighting for this country or everybody else would be speaking German right now if it wasn't for us the Greatest Generation. The one thing from war that I will never forget is that we should never go to war ever; you need to avoid war at all costs because nobody wins. There are many stories that I keep to myself. We are like a secret society; we don't really discuss what went on maybe because we don't want to remember it was horrible.

I'm lucky that I got right back into working. I don't have any PTSD, and maybe that's why I'm still able to walk around at 100 years old. I've got a lot of metals; the one I'm most proud of is the Purple Heart. Out of 16 million people that fought in World War II, I think only 1 million got the Purple Heart and there's only about 240,000 of us left out of the 16 million. I got the good conduct medal as well and probably three other metals. I have somebody that wants to take me back to Germany, but I don't think I should make the trip. I'm not sure I want to see that place it's probably all built up by now, but when I was there it was just rubble from the bombings. After World War II, I got right back into work. I worked as an upholsterer and I'm very close to my family so I still do many things and I live by one martini a day; that is the secret to life for the last 75 years I've had one martini a day. Right now, I have my own podcast on Spotify that everyone can listen to. It is called "Uncle Joey The First Hundred Years," so tune in to hear lots of stories. They are short stories and short shows and we try to put them out every Friday.

