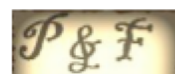


Welcome to Joe's Help Line

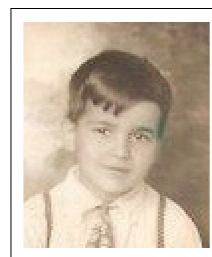


Joeshelpline.org

[HOME](#) [SEARCH](#) [EVENTS](#) [CONTRIBUTIONS](#) [BENEFITS](#) [WHO INSPIRED YOU?](#) [ABOUT US](#)
[TESTIMONIAL](#) [JOE PALOMBO DEDICATION](#) [ANIMAL ASSIST](#) [INTERNSHIPS](#) [ALLIANCES](#) [SPONSORS](#)

Joe Palombo Dedication

77th division World War - ...



Joe Palombo -->

[Click Here for Spanish](#)



Catching the Eye of the
Whitehouse



<Our Heroes of the 77th Division - the Lost Battalion (No Sound to Video) >

My name is George. My story is about my dad, Joe Palombo, the inspiration behind JoesHelpLine.org. Dad shared this story with me back in May of 1972. The story came up because of some of my dad's possessions that my brother and I used to play with when we were kids. I asked my dad where he got those old whistles and a horseshoe.

The story goes like this:

Dad's father, my grandfather, Dominic, came over to the States from Italy in the late 1800s. Dominic lived in New York City for several years. He opened up a shoe repair and shine business there. Dominic wanted to raise a family, but because of intimidation from the so-called Robin Hood families in New York (what we now call the mob), my grandfather picked up and moved to Pennsylvania, where he reopened his business.

My dad, Joe, was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When my father was 10 years old, Dominic took in a boy from the orphanage to apprentice in the shoe repair business. His name was Fix. Fix was two years older than my father. Everyone called him Fix because he was good with his hands and could fix things. Joe and Fix quickly became good friends.

It was 1918. Though once neutral, America had joined the allied efforts of World War One. All of Dad's older buddies had enlisted in the Army. Joe and Fix were watching all their older friends go off to the war in France. After living and working with the Palombo family for about three months, Fix told Joe that he was going to get on a cargo ship that was headed to France. My dad decided to join him. Fix was just 12 years old, and my dad was only 10. At that young age, Joe and Fix became stowaways on a cargo ship crossing the Atlantic.

Once the boys arrived in France, they found it harder to get off the ship than it had been to sneak aboard. When they finally did get back on land, Joe and Fix mingled with the townspeople. Of course, they had some language problems, but they had no problem being taken in. They easily made friends with local kids their own age. Though Fix was only a couple of years older than Joe, he was tall for his age, and had a big frame. He looked like he could be 15 or 16.

One day in late June, the two American boys went to look for some of their buddies, but they couldn't find anyone. Joe and Fix knew that some of their friends from back home were still going through training. They found out that

the trainees were working along with engineers to rebuild roads and railroad tracks that had been bombed out. So the two American boys set off to find their older buddies who were now soldiers.

They learned that once the rails were finished, the young soldiers started moving to the war front. They were told it took three days to get to “the Front.” Ever the adventurer, Fix wanted to see how close he could get to the Front. Joe did not want to be left behind in a strange country without his good friend. So off they went, straight towards the carnage of World War One.

Between rail and road travel, Joe and Fix made it almost to the Front before they got caught. They were taken to the nearest headquarters of the American army where all the military brass were. The general was so mad and embarrassed that two kids had traveled that far into a war zone!

The boys knew they were in trouble, but they did not expect what happened next. Joe and Fix thought they would be taken back to port and put on a ship back to America. Instead, just the opposite happened. The general told them they were staying there at headquarters until the war ended.

The boys were given chores. They both worked all day long with very little sleep. Fix was sent to help the soldiers who worked on equipment. Joe was given many different chores to do. Some of the work was grueling, but there were a couple of things that Dad did not mind doing at all. One of them was turning the grinding wheel for the soldiers to sharpen their *bayonets*. Joe also enjoyed helping to take care of the homing pigeons, which the military used to send messages back and forth between the Front and the division headquarters when the lines were down.

Another one of Joe’s chores was to keep a black horse clean and ready for a captain. That captain was very mean to Joe at first, until he found out that Dad was from the same hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. From that time on, things seemed to get better. The captain called my dad “Joey” instead of “kid,” and Dad called the captain, “Captain George.”

My dad said the hardest part to accept was when the soldiers that he knew went to the Front and never came back. He started helping the guys with the Red Cross on their arms – I suppose they were doctors or medics. One of his chores was to fetch maggots to be used for soldiers that had gangrene. That was how they treated gangrene. The maggots ate the damaged tissue.

There were so many injured soldiers coming in that the nurses and the guys with the Red Cross on their arms were always on the go. They did not have a hospital. The doctors and medics and nurses did the best they could with what they had.

Many soldiers with the Red Cross on their arms were either killed or badly injured saving their buddies. My dad got to know most of them. He said it was tough to hold back tears because he did not want to show his emotions. Remember, he was just a 10-year-old boy at the time. My dad was a street-tough individual, but that war showed him what life was all about. Little Joey Palombo learned that giving, in one way or another, is Life itself.

You see, you do not need to hold a firearm to be a hero. Joe learned to be what I call a true giver. Others gave their limbs, their sight, their lives. Many were burned and blinded by the chemicals. The smell was unbelievable. If the bullets or gas or shrapnel didn't get you, the sickness did. Many soldiers at that time died before even getting to the Front. Because of the conditions of the trenches and the weather, Dad said if you got sick, you more than likely did not make it.

When he told me this story, my dad and I talked all night. We were up almost 'til dawn as he told me his story and what he thought about life. To my dad, giving was living. I am so fortunate to have had somebody like my dad to talk to. You see, my dad was not just a giver, but also a very humble and private man. If I had not asked where he got the sword and a Navy whistle and a German whistle and several other items, I probably would never have heard this amazing story.

When the war ended, Dad said that he and his friend, Fix, had a harder time getting back to the States than getting to France. They finally made it back to the States aboard a military transport ship. The soldiers helped Joe hide the sword Captain George had given him, and one of his soldier buddies helped him get the sword off the ship.

From the ship to his parents home in Pennsylvania was a long way. The boys hitchhiked. At one point, after a truck driver dropped them off, some local thugs approached the boys wanting to take away the sword. Thankfully, the truck driver saw what was happening and returned with a shotgun to chase off the thugs. Then, that kind man drove way out of his way and gave Dad and Fix a ride home to Pennsylvania.

While the boys were an ocean away in the middle of a war, my grandfather, Dominic, thought that Joe and Fix had

been taken by someone to work in factory. At that time there were a lot of children being kidnapped and forced into labor. My grandfather assumed that's what happened to the boys. *My grandfather and grandmother searched for weeks, but no one at the factories near or far had seen the boys.*

My dad told his dad that he had written a letter telling him where he was, but my grandfather said he never received that letter. My dad said he appreciated his father so much more after he returned home. He said Fix and Dominic did not talk for a while, until Fix apologized to my grandfather. But as soon as he did, my grandfather turned around, and began thanking Fix for bringing Joey back home. Joe and Fix were best friends right up until the late 1930s, when Fix died.

My dad loved to race cars, especially Buicks. Fix was the mechanic and Dad was the wheel man. They raced mostly in Pennsylvania. Fix nicknamed Dad, "*Spittin' Joe*" because at that time, a lot of the racecars did not have windshields and the racetracks were dirt, so Dad was always spitting dirt after a race. Both Joe and Fix bought brand new 1938 Buick two-door coupes. Fix's car had a two-tone color. My dad's was all black. He called it The Black Beauty after Captain George's horse, Blackie. Dad said The Black Beauty got him out of so many close calls because of the power that Fix put into it.

When they weren't racing, Joe and Fix rode their Indian motorcycles up and down the hills of Pennsylvania. One autumn weekend, they were riding their bikes in the local hills. My dad was following. As Fix rounded a turn, his front wheel slipped on some wet leaves. Fix and the bike were thrown into a tree, and Fix was killed instantly. My dad lost his best friend that day. He could not bear to ride his Indian again, even though he loved that bike so much.

Joe still raced cars for a little while after that, but without Fix there, it wasn't the same.

I will be sharing more of my dad's interesting life with you in the coming months.

Going back to when my dad was in France . . .

In the years since my dad's death, I have been able to verify much of what he told me. What I am looking for now is people who have heard about or knew of or may even have an old family photo of Joey Palombo and his friend, Fix, during that time. It has been nearly a century now. The only ones who may know of this are either loved ones or family that have heard this story of two young American boys helping the allied army in France in World War One.

They were at the 77th Division headquarters of the American Army. It would mean so much to me to meet or talk to the grandchildren or loved ones who knew Captain George or the other soldiers stationed in France in 1918, especially the ones who had the Red Cross on their arms.

There was one soldier that my dad said he hung around with a lot. He was the one that took care of the carrier pigeons. Dad told me he remembers that soldier telling him if it wasn't for one of the pigeons, the outcome of one of the battles may have been different. He also said that one particular pigeon lost part of his foot and one eye. Perhaps someone remembers hearing this story from an older relative? If so, please contact me.

My dad was in France between the middle of 1918 through the fall of 1919. The war ended on 11/11/1918. The next day, my dad went out with the soldiers with the Red Cross on their arms, and a recovery crew, to look for soldiers that were either injured or lost. He had Blackie, the horse, with him. Because of the intense bombing several hours before the end of the war, there was not much left of anything. Dad said it was very hard to get around, as there was so much damage and huge holes and craters from all the shelling.

Dad met a German soldier, out there by himself, looking for a family member. One of the soldiers of the recovery team had given my dad a German whistle that they found. My dad went up to the German soldier and wanted to give him the whistle. The soldier said something in German that Joe didn't understand. Then he said to my dad in English, "Keep and remember," and he walked away. Even as an older man, Joe did keep and remember the many life lessons he learned as a boy in World War One.

My dad also told me there were things he saw, smelled, heard and touched that I should not know. When I asked my dad what happened to Blackie, the horse, he said there were so many that did not make it back, and Blackie was one of them. He also told me, "If it wasn't for Blackie, you would have never been born." I didn't understand that at the time. When I asked him what happened, he would not tell me. He just changed the subject.

My dad was a blue-collar worker who was not rich or famous. What he did have was a big heart. He told me just before he died, "There are three types of people in the world: Takers, Followers, and Givers. You need to choose which you will be. I can't tell you, and I will not tell you which path to choose, but I will ask you for a promise that you will never be a hypocrite. And I feel you will choose well."

When I was in first grade, it was suggested I be put in advance placement. I was one of the smartest kids in class. I

won a writing contest. Then I had a sporting accident that deprived my brain of oxygen and caused some serious neurological damage. I went from being the brightest kid, to the "slowest" kid in school. I failed second grade. Twice. The "experts" suggested that my parents place me in an institution. But my parents stuck up for me. My dad worked with me, taught me and shared his daily life with me. I am the man I am today, because my dad gave me so much of his time, his love, his wisdom, and his heart. You see, my dad was not just a father to me, he was my hero, my teacher, my advocate and my best buddy.

It has been many years since my dad's passing. Since then, I have been helping others in several different ways on a one-to-one basis. Even though I myself face many challenges, I have kept my promise to my dad to make him proud. I will not let challenges hold me back from what I want to do. Because of the Internet, I know I can reach a lot more people now. I would like to multiply what I have been doing the past several years. I would like to encourage people to give and help others in whatever ways they can.

I am in my middle 60s now. I am in the last chapter of my life. My brother, Tom, and I are creating a way to honor Dad and continue his legacy of giving. The Palombo & Friends Foundation is dedicated to the memory of our dad, Joe Palombo, and other true givers like him. This website, JoesHelpLine.org, is an extension of the Palombo foundation. It is a place for people to volunteer their time and service to others, the way Joe always did.

If you are reading this now, perhaps you are one of the true givers. If you'd like to help out in your community, or help us with the work of this foundation, please send us an email. Our official launch date for the grand opening of JoesHelpLine.org is 11/11/2012. It is a sentimental date, significant in many ways. But there is no need to wait until then.

We are looking for volunteers to help in all areas. We can definitely use help from professionals experienced in providing services to those with physical and mental challenges and social service workers who work with the elderly and challenged. If you provide volunteer services in your community to those in need, please let us know more about yourself and your organization. If you are retired, or just someone that has some free time to help others going through some tough times, we can use your help. If you'd like to make a donation, your gift will help us to help others. ([Donate Here](#)) Our mission is to provide a clearinghouse of services for those facing challenges.

I believe in angels. I know they are still out there. If you are an angel on Earth or you just want to help make a

difference, please **contact us**.

By George J. Palombo © 2012

Terms and Conditions of Use and Privacy Policy



