

Brigadier General Joseph M. Stehling

2000 Outstanding Alumnus

While reading Tom Brokaw's book, *The Greatest Generation*, Helen Hutter decided that Joe Stehling, fellow 1933 BDHS graduate, should be on the Wall of Fame. "His commitment to his country speaks for itself. He, like so many of our classmates, made a great sacrifice in WW II. In honoring him, we are acknowledging the services of so many Beaver Dam residents who served in that war."

Stehling, who continues to reside in Beaver Dam in his retirement, has a long and illustrious military career that began in 1932. When he was a junior in high school, he enlisted as a private in Wisconsin's 32nd Division National Guard Company E. In 1942, he began overseas duty in South Australia. He participated in four major campaigns of action in the South Pacific Theater -- Papuan, New Guinea, and Luzon and Leyte in the Philippine Islands. In 1946, after forty months of overseas duty, he returned to the United States.

Prior to leaving Federal Service in 1946, Stehling served as unit commander, combat intelligence officer, adjutant, personnel officer, and battalion executive officer. In 1947, after returning to inactive status following WW II, he rejoined the 32nd Infantry Division as Battalion Commander. In 1961-62, he served in the Berlin Crisis. In 1967, during a civil disturbance in Milwaukee, he was on state active duty as Assistant Division Commander. In 1969 and in 1970, he was Task Force Commander of thousands of National Guard troops ordered to the University of Wisconsin.

Throughout his thirty-eight years in the military, from overseas action to National Guard duty in Wisconsin, Stehling moved up the ranks, from private to brigadier general. In 1967, General Stehling was appointed Commanding General, 32nd Infantry Brigade (Red Arrow) of the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

Among many commendations for leadership, bravery, and commitment, Stehling's military awards and medals include the Purple Heart, the Legion of Merit Award, the Silver Star, the American Defense Service Medal, and the American Campaign Medal.

Beyond the military, Stehling gave his dedication to family, community, and a civilian career. He was an integral part of the beginnings of youth baseball in Beaver Dam and was Little League president until he returned to active duty. He also served on the Beaver Dam Board of Education.

Joe spent forty plus years working at one company, first known as Rassman Manufacturing and then Kirsh Foundry. He also co-founded Advance Products and retired from Kirsh as Vice-President.

Joe is exceptionally proud of his family of ten children. All graduated from Beaver Dam High School.

One letter of testimony states, "Throughout his life, General Joseph M. Stehling's unwavering integrity, vision, and leadership have served as an inspiration to his friends and family. His unconditional support for them has set an example and taught them to live life with their hearts and minds open to all possibilities and to respond to duty with honor...All who have had the privilege of knowing him personally have benefited from him and those who have not, still continue to benefit from the legacy he has helped to create."