

Keith Carstedt Gets Silver Star For Bravery In Action

Keith Carstedt, who lived in Grundy county nearly all of his life, was awarded the Silver Star medal at a special service at Atlantic City, New Jersey, on Monday.

The Silver Star medal is the fourth highest award given American soldiers by their government and is awarded to men who have distinguished themselves by showing outstanding courage and bravery in combat.

Keith Carstedt won his medal while driving a jeep during combat in North Africa last April.

MOTHER PRESENT AT SERVICE

Mrs. Pearl Carstedt, mother of Grundy's decorated soldier, was present at the service at Atlantic City last Monday. Mrs. Carstedt was the first of the Mothers-of-the-Month club who will be brought to Atlantic City by Atlantic City boosters to visit their sons who are in an army hospital there.

Keith is in the hospital at Atlantic City recovering from a badly mangled foot resulting when a booby trap left by the Germans exploded in an orchard near Bizerte.



An anonymous committee will select each month one they believe would most enjoy a visit with a soldier son convalescing here.

Mrs. Carstedt was invited to be the first not only because of the length of time since she had seen Keith, but particularly because he

CARSTEDT—

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was to be honored Monday with the Silver Star.

Mrs. Carstedt is serving as housekeeper in the home of H. Herman Moeller in Washington township. She has two sons and one daughter. The other son, Ray, lives on a farm near Lincoln. The daughter, Mrs. Edward Purvis, lives in Reinbeck.

Ralph Carstedt, father of Keith, died twenty-one years ago when Keith was three years old.

Goes Into Army in 1941

Keith Carstedt enlisted in the U. S. Army with the National Guard in February 1941. His initial training was at Camp Claiborne. Later he was sent to Ireland and then to Africa.

Delivered Ammunition Under Constant Fire

The service which won him the high award was performed in North Africa last April in deliver-

ing ammunition to the firing line. Volunteers were asked for the dangerous assignment. Keith was the first to volunteer. "Guess I'll haul it up, sir," he told the lieutenant, "it's my job to drive the jeep anyway."

He hauled two jeep loads of ammunition across the sandy African plain that April afternoon, with enemy mortar and machine gun fire beating all around him, drove "a load of grub" to the front lines that night, and spent the next afternoon evacuating wounded soldiers from the battle area.

When he returned from delivering the second load of ammunition the springs "were bent in the other direction," he said Saturday.

"Driving that jeep was my job. When a runner came back and told us they were getting short of ammunition up front, we loaded my jeep with heavy and light shells, and some smoke shells, and I started off."

Dotted With Dunes

It was a half-mile ride across open fields from his bivouac to the ammunition dump where the battle lines were drawn, he explained. The fields were dotted with sand dunes, some five feet high.

"I tried to keep the sand piles between me and the Germans," Pfc. Carstedt continued. "I ducked from one to another. I thought

I was out of sight most of the way, but I found out later I wasn't. The worst of it was the noise. I could hear those shells coming. I had a rifle with me, but I didn't have use for it. You can't drive a jeep load of ammunition and fire a gun, too."

It wasn't until Fondouk Pass was taken two days later and he stood and looked down at the fields he had crossed and recrossed that Pfc. Carstedt realized what a target he had been.

"I really got scared then," he said, "even tho the battle was over. Those sand hills I thought were such good cover were no cover at all. You could look right down over them. Why, I'd been out in the open all the time. I could see every little place where I had been, fox-holes and everything. Whew! Just one hit and me and the jeep and the ammunition would have all been blown up together."

Thru Kasserine Pass

Pfc. Carstedt drove his battered jeep thru the rest of the campaign. He had taken it thru the Kasserine Pass battle before Fondouk.

It was on June 17, more than

a month after the Germans and Italians had surrendered, that he stepped on a buried booby trap.

When it happened he and other members of his unit were clearing up guns, helmets, trucks, pieces of tanks and other equipment the Germans had left behind. He was blown two feet in the air, he said.