

# Photo needed

**John Ritema**

**KIA 6 July 1945**

**Army Staff Sergeant**



John Ritema was killed in a vehicle accident days after being awarded the Bronze Star for heroic action against the enemy during the battle for Colmar (Alsace). John served with 112<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. His death is especially tragic since the 28<sup>th</sup> would depart Europe and head home less than 1 month later.

The 28th earned the nickname Bloody Bucket due to the shape and red color of its patch. The 28<sup>th</sup> saw extensive action in the Hurtgen Forest, Ardennes, and the Colmar pocket.

John's unit was moving through a vineyard, pushing through the wooden vine supports. The last set were laced with barbed wire and the unit was in an ambush. The unit became pinned under machine gun and mortar fire. John took the wire cutters from one of his men and instructed them all to keep their heads down. He then cut through the wire while under fire from the enemy, giving his unit a path through.

John lived on Zeliff Ave with parents John and Sarah and siblings Warren, Roy, and Elva. He may have also resided on Brookside Ave. He worked at Wright Aeronautical in Paterson prior to the war.