

Remembering buddies

Faded snapshots bring back vivid war

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Sixty five years have passed since Henry Roche carried a rifle on the battlefields of Europe, but his memory of the "war to end all wars" is still vivid.

Roche, 84, of Redford Township, spent Memorial Day as usual at a service held in a local cemetery honoring the war dead.

"They're all dead now--all my friends from the war," he said. Folded into the pages of a history book he keeps on his outfit, the 32nd Division, are his own personal newspaper clippings and faded snapshots of soldiers and officers. He says he wrote a personal history of the war shortly after returning home, but has since

misplaced it.

Two typed pages of a post-war journal are tucked inside the history book, expressing the frustrations of a young man fresh out of the Army.

"We are being told by people that call themselves experts on world affairs that in order to bring the country back to a normal condition we must all settle down and work. But if we go to these same fellows who are telling us to settle down and work and ask them for a job, they will tell us that they are laying off men."

"J.D. Pocketteller tells us we should be satisfied with \$15 a week, we would but where can we get even that much?"

Roche managed to find work as a watchmaker after the war. He owned a watch making and repair shop in Detroit until his retirement.

HIS TOUR of duty in France and Germany is a proud point of his past. For half a century, he's been active in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, serving as a past post commander of the River Rouge post. His wife, Alice, whom he married in 1920, is a past state president of the VFW Auxiliary. Both now belong to Redford VFW Post 345 & Auxiliary.

Hesitant at first to talk about his war years, Roche recalled minute details of his wartime experiences with a little prompting.

Beginning his Army career in the National Guard in his hometown of Owosso, Roche spent time in Ft. Wayne and Camp McArthur, Texas, before being shipped abroad on the Martha Washington.

"IT WAS an old cattle ship," he said, recalling how he took his turn in the "crows nest" watching for German submarines.

"There were 15 ships in the convoy, and seven destroyers scouting for subs," he said.

It was two weeks before the convoy reached its destination, Brest, France.

"I had several jobs," he said. "I was back private, then private first class, then corporal, then I was promoted to gas company sergeant."

"I inspected gas masks for pin holes for our whole company."

After the war, Roche joined the reserves and retired at the rank of 1st Lieutenant.

Among the clearest of old memories are the battles he fought in France and Germany during his 15 months overseas. The first one was the worst, he said.

"The first battle, we were 260 strong. We lost 200 the first day, after just two hours of fighting. The Germans were picking us off from church towers. It was a foolish battle, moving into the fire line. The 50 of us held up in a crater on a hill until we were given an order to retreat. After that, it was easier going."

The life of a foot soldier in World War One influenced Roche into talking his son into joining the Navy in World War Two.

"At least in the Navy, you have a place to sleep," he said. "In the Army, we slept in trench boxes. You had to be below the surface of the ground to keep away from shrapnel of exploding shells. I'd wake up sometimes soaked in water."



Henry Roche, (bottom row, second from right) mugs for the camera with friends, circa 1918. The World War One veteran fought in several battles in Germany and France.

Conway is honored as community scholar

Donnell Conway, 21, of Farmington Hills, was among students selected on their academic potential to be a University of Michigan Community College Scholar. Her selection was based on her academic record and course selection at Oakland Community College. In addition to its academic distinction, this designation provides a scholarship to be applied toward her first year of study.

While attending OCC she was recreation events director of the Student Government Council. She was responsible for non-varsity sports recreation

programs, tournaments, and promotion of other programs that involve active participation of the students. She was a member of both the Academic Senate and the Board of Broadcasters Guild of WORR. She also co-hosted a sports program at WORR.

Conway, who graduated from Farmington High School in 1979, will be joining her brother Patrick, 20, this fall at U. of M. where they will both be juniors.

She is the daughter of Loretta Conway of Farmington Hills and Thomas D. Conway of Ann Arbor.

Eye surgery progresses

Continued from Page 3A

man and selected counterparts across the country are administering aspirin to patients whose eyes show the onset of cataracts.

The two-year project is based on the theory of Dr. Edward Cotlier of Yale University who noticed that cataract development seemed to be delayed or halted among elderly arthritic patients who took aspirin over an extended period.

"We can't recommend to the public that they take aspirin to prevent cataracts, because right now we don't know why it works on," Castleman said.

"We hope to find out through the study if it's better to operate or medi-

cate."

The best prescription for preserving good eyesight is "good personal hygiene, regular hours, enough sleep, proper and sufficient diet, ample outdoor exercise, and periodic eye exams," he adds.

The ophthalmologist holds great hope for the 1.7 million Americans currently afflicted with cataracts. In the developmental stages is "yag" laser surgery, which in a fraction of a second can accomplish cataract removal without anesthesia or incisions.

"Yag laser surgery is a new procedure from France that will be a quick shot in and out for the patient. As soon as the technology is available, we'll be performing the operation here," says Castleman.



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