



—Grand Rapids Press Photograph

CHESTER J. KLOSKA holds a 50-year-old newspaper which printed a letter his brother wrote from France in the bloody days of World War I.

Letter From Front Recalls '18 War

"During the last stay at the front one of my pals was killed and I had three narrow escapes as my bevy was blown up twice.

"Shortly after I got out of it a bomb struck in the trench about six inches below a box of grenades . . . The man on guard experienced a thrilling sensation as the shell struck and broke his rifle."

Those are excerpts from a letter printed in the Allegan Gazette March 29, 1919.

Chester J. Kloska, 57, of 2557 Evernia Ave. SE remembered that letter this Memorial Day — it was written by his brother Edward from the Argonne Forest in France.

Edward wrote it to his parents, six brothers and four sisters in Dorr and the Allegan paper reprinted it under the headline "With Forces in France."

The sub-headlines give a clue to the adventures recounted in the lengthy letter:

"Over the Top with the Australians."

"English Are Good Fellows."

"Wounded."

"Treated Well in English Hospital."

"Found Graves of Friends in Argonne Wood."

"Friendly Cooties."

The most chilling part of the letter recounts Edward's experience when he volunteered for a burial detail in France after Nov. 11, 1918, Armistice.

"When we first arrived we had to go through the wood to look for bodies and for unregistered graves. When this work was completed we had to check every grave and mark it on the map. While doing this I found the graves of my bed partner and four of my best friends."

Chester was only 7 at the time his brother was serving with Company L, 132nd Infantry, 33rd Division. Edward was wounded three times during World War I and "never cared to talk about the war very much" in later years, Chester recalls.

Edward, only one of the seven sons of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kloska to serve in the war, died in 1966 at the age of 69 at his Hopewell, Va., home. All the other six Kloska sons are still living in West Michigan.

The original letter home was lost, but Chester still preserves the part reprinted in the Gazette.

"You very seldom get a letter like that," he says.