

Page 23 - Kristopher Mayich on the Eastern Front

ISSUE: Issue 33

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1983/6/1

H. L. Livingstone: The second time I was wounded, I was over in one of those raids. We had laid down, waiting for the barrage. And when the barrage came, we were right behind an old hedge that had been a part of a farm before the Germans broke through. And I found a gap in the hedge, and I got ahead of our people. I could run pretty fast then, anyway. I got round an old gun- pit. It was just sloping down one side, to get the guns down--it was about the size of this house. And there were little holes where the Germans slept all round it. And I was shooting them as they ran out. And this little fellow, he couldn't have been any more than 16, came out. And I didn't have the heart to shoot him. So I took him prisoner, with his hands in the air. And just at that moment, either a German bomb, mortar, or grenade--or one of ours. Our people landed after me, see, and they were throwing them dovm in the gunpit; thought I was German, I suppose. One instant it's bright as day--a flare--and the next in? stant it's pitch dark. And it threw me right back on my heels. It's a wonder that I wasn't killed. I guess I was lucky. And I got a piece of shrapnel in the upper part of my arm, in my left arm. It was time then to leave, and get out guick. So I took the little German with me. We stopped in No Man's Land, in a shallow trench that the British had dug, had started to dig--it was only about two feet deep. And he and I were lying down in that. Because my brother had told me to stay in No Man's Land until the shelling goes over, because they always came back and smashed our trenches to pieces. So the two of us lay there, myself and the little German. And in the light of a flare, he saw blood dripping from my fingers. He must have been a stretcher-bearer, because he found somewhere in his tunic a little pair of scissors about that long, and slit? ting my sleeve from wrist to shoulder, he bandaged up my wounded arm. And every time a shell would burst close enough to us-- they put a barrage in this trench, you see, as well as in the front line--every time a shell would burst close, he'd put his arm around me for protection. I often wish I could have seen him afterwards. He may have been killed in Hitler's war. I was there about 20 minutes, this little German and I, then we sprinted back to our lines. Soon as we got into the front line, I stumbled over the body of the captain who had been in charge of the raid. He was killed by the shelling that occurred after? ward. I turned the German over to battal? ion headquarters. He went his way to peace in a prisoner-of-war camp; I went my way to all the delights of an English spring in a hospital in Kent. Just an immense gar? den. Just like going from hell into heaven. Bunch of nurses fussing over me. Kristopher Mayich on the Eastern Front Kristopher Mayich, Whitney Pier: I was bom in Croatia, part of Yugoslavia. I was home when war was declared. Austria de? clared war on Serbia., They took me with my two horses to carry food behind the troops. They called my brother to bring the horses to the centre, to the commandant, to the city. My father and my mother were crying, crying. I said, "I can take the horses up there. I'm a young man." (Only 16.) "They are going to send me back." But when I took the horses, they didn't send me back. They held me up there, and I was carrying food behind the army for 11 months. They paid me every day, what would be around 75c a day. The



Austro-Hungarian army went in Montene? gro, and then through into Serbia. The 8th of September, 1914, we crossed the river in Serbia, behind the army. We went up to Sarajevo and to Gomji Milanovac. And the Serbian army counterattacked. The Austro- Hungarian army was running back. They were going forward for two months--they went out in ten days. (In retreat?) Yeah. Then (23)