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Winter Issue 2003

Howard County's Silver Star Recipients

By
Carl Christensen &
Connie Christensen

Part two in a series of three.

The courage, bravery, initiative, and devotion to duty displayed by Second Lieutenant Christensen reflect the finest traditions of the Armed Forces and are deserving of the highest praise." — Taken from the Silver Star Medal citation.



Lieutenant Alvin E. Christensen of Saint Paul, Nebraska carried in U.S. wounded under enemy fire. Christensen was trained as a field artillery officer. Photograph courtesy of Carl Christensen and Connie Christensen.

A life-long native resident of Howard County, Alvin Christensen was a true military hero in service to our country and an important contributor in many ways to the betterment of Howard County. His military experience began with ROTC training at the University of Nebraska where he received his commission as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army.

Lieutenant Alvin Christensen was ordered to active duty on January 8, 1942 and was assigned to Battery C, 68th Field Artillery Battalion, First Armored Division. Battery C was sent to northern Ireland and Scotland before arriving in northern Africa late in 1942. This began a six-month campaign by the 1st Armored Division in Tunisia in northern Africa.

"Tumultuous night fire fight"

Combat action with German tanks in the very early morning of February 17, 1943 earned the 68th Field Artillery Battalion the award of the Presidential Unit Citation. Lt. Alvin Christensen was awarded the Silver Star medal for his part in that critical night battle. The following description of that night is quoted from the book titled "The Battle History of the 1st Armored Division" by George F. Howe, Combat Forces Press, copyright 1954, reprinted by Special Permission of the First Armored Division Association, The Battery Press, Inc., 1979. Starting on page 173, the book recounts these events:

"By radio, Helms [Battery C commander Captain George E. Helms] was authorized to move his battery into positions near the road [toward Sbeitla], east of the 90 mm antiaircraft battery. He echeloned the SP 105s



U.S. Military Silver Star Medal

[self-propelled 105 mm artillery] in three pairs astride the highway, and found a medium tank ready to support

them from the northern side of the highway. The SPs were completing their movement into reconnoitered positions, and other vehicles were being redispensed at about 0115 when a foot patrol discovered some German tanks [probably Pzkw IVs of the 21st Panzer Division, called Mark IVs by Allied forces] only forty or fifty yards from the easternmost American howitzer. From a slit trench Helms fired tracer on the lead tank and drew return fire. One by one the other enemy tanks revealed their positions.

What followed was a tumultuous night fire fight in which one howitzer was hit, another was misdirected into a wadi and tipped helplessly on its side, and three of the enemy tanks were knocked out while tracers, high-explosive, machine-gun and small arms fire gushed from both sides.



Eleven veterans of Battery C of the 68 Field Artillery Battalion met in Saint Paul, Nebraska for a three day reunion in 1983. The men, their rank in the war, and their addresses are, left to right, back row: George O'Toole, Sergeant, Istine, New Jersey; John Frederick, T3, Coatesville, Pennsylvania; Roy Tibbets, Lieutenant, Palm Coast, Florida; D.W. Speck, Staff Sergeant, Ponca, Florida; Robert Bard, (Headquarters Battery 68 Field Artillery Battalion), Captain, Chicago, Illinois; Leo Gough, First Sergeant, El Paso, Texas; front row: Chuck Scelfo, Staff Sergeant, Pittsford, New York; Ken Mason, Captain, Akron, Ohio; Harry Hughes, T4, Keedysville, Maryland; Alvin Christensen, Lieutenant, Dannebrog, Nebraska; Pete Crafton, Sergeant, Henderson, Kentucky; and Sam Ballinger, T5, Dayton, Ohio. Photograph courtesy of the Saint Paul Photograph-Herald

The Americans, including the crew of the medium tank, fired prodigally until their ammunition began to run low. Small groups of wounded men sought cover in holes, or wadis, or behind sandy hummocks while the medics moved up toward the sounds of battle and arrived to furnish aid at the critical time.

As suddenly as it broke out, the firing ceased. The enemy broke off and pulled back, leaving three tanks, of which they salvaged two before dawn. Four of Battery C's SP 105s moved back through the olive grove with only a few rounds left. By morning, Colonel Burba's battalion was in position on the high ground west of Sbeitla and registering on the area near which the battle had occurred. Later, it received the Distinguished Unit Citation for this night action." [The 68th Field Artillery Battalion had stopped the advance of the Germans in the area, thereby protecting U.S. Army personnel and allowing withdrawal of U.S. Army forces to a new position.]

Silver Star

The Silver Star medal was presented to Lt. Alvin Christensen for gallantry in action. The citation read, in part: "On February 17, 1943, Second Lieutenant Christensen distinguished himself in action against an armed enemy near Sbeitla, Tunisia. While the battery was engaged in a tank action with the enemy and receiving heavy fire, he voluntarily, and with complete disregard for his own welfare, went from section to section encouraging and assisting them in delivering fire on the enemy. He helped carry the wounded across a road which was under heavy and close machine-gun fire. He then started a collecting station for the wounded and



Alvin Christensen and Margy Pedersen were married in Lincoln, Nebraska on January 14, 1945. Photograph courtesy of Carl Christensen and Corrie Christensen.

administered first aid. He also displayed great courage in locating and obtaining information about forward gun sections and in recovering disabled vehicles. The courage, bravery, initiative, and devotion to duty displayed by Second Lieutenant Christensen reflects the finest traditions of the Armed Forces and are deserving of the highest praise."

An individual picture of Lt. Alvin Christensen with other Silver Star medal recipients in combat uniform was featured in the May 17, 1943 issue of *Life Magazine*. Battery C moved on to Italy after north Africa in October 1943. After Anzio beachhead, a four month conflict, the men of Battery C proceeded as part of a large force toward Rome. After the taking of Rome in June of 1944, Lt. Christensen was rotated back to the United States to Fort Knox, Kentucky and was discharged from military service in 1946 with the rank of Captain.

Reunion of Battery C

Forty years after that fiery night on the road to Sbeitla, members of Battery C were reunited in Howard County. Alvin planned and hosted their first reunion in Saint Paul in June of 1983 and invited them to his home in Dannebrog. He took great pleasure in being able to share experiences with his old buddies, and especially being able to communicate once again with those men he had carried to safety years ago. Alvin Christensen died on December 19, 1983, about five months after this reunion. Battery C upheld the tradition he started by continuing to hold annual reunions.

Military awards to Lt. Christensen were: Silver Star Medal Hq 1st A.D. 15 Mar 45, European-African-Middle Eastern Service Medal, American Campaign Service Medal, and Victory Medal World War II. Battles and campaigns he served in were: Tunisia, Naples-Foggia, Rome-Arno, and North Apennines.

Howard County history

Alvin Christensen, born January 16, 1918, was the son of Carl and Sophia Christensen of Saint Paul, Nebraska. Alvin Christensen and Margy Pedersen were married in Lincoln, Nebraska on January 14, 1945. Margy and Alvin both graduated from St. Paul High School in 1935. After Alvin's discharge, the couple returned to Howard County, residing at Saint Paul, then Dannebrog.

● *of note: The Howard County Historical Society seeks your help. If you know of any other Silver Star recipients from Howard County, please let us know.*

A tribute to small businesses in Nebraska.

THOSE AMAZING PIONEERS. THEY CONQUERED NEW TERRITORY. THEY TAMED THE LAND.
AND THEY STILL HAVE STORIES LEFT TO TELL.

Lukasiewicz Furniture of Farwell, Nebraska History written by the Lukasiewicz family

Charles (C.S.) Lukasiewicz was the founder of Lukasiewicz Furniture, Carpet and Appliance, Inc. in Farwell. In 1896 he began working at Jim Lange's Hardware store. He worked as an apprentice in Ashton under C.C. Miles to learn the trade. In 1898, he started his own harness shop just north of the hotel. After four or five years when Lange built a hardware store (currently Lukasiewicz Hardware Warehouse), Charles moved his shop right south of there. In 1910, he built and moved across the street (currently appliance showroom). He patented the Neck Yoke Improvement Invention on January 25, 1910 and continued in the harness business until 1915. Cigars, clocks, watches and jewelry were sold along with the harnesses.

Various products and services have been added over the years. From 1915 to 1917, automobiles were sold and serviced. Charles remembered, "My first car was an open Overland, no top, no sides, no windshield. After that I



bought a top and made curtains for the doors. We used to make curtains for these cars at home in the evenings till midnight. Grandma (Anna Wysocki Lukasiewicz) helped me. For a few years I sold Chev cars. The last car sold was an Auburn. The Chev was a good little car except for the transmission which had to be new every six months."

Charles also started undertaking

when Steve Petersen burned out. Pete Jacobsen, Sr. was his only embalmer associate. Paul and wife Emelia, along with Edward, helped operate the business. Charles retired after 50 years of operation in 1949. Edward continued operating the hardware store (which is ran by son Vian) while Paul's family operated the store. Laverne and Melvin, sons of Paul and Emelia, later took over running the business. After the death of Lavern, his family—Randy, Rosanne, Roger, Mary and Teresa—ran the business along with Ron Pawloski. The business continues today with the fourth-generation leadership of the Lukasiewicz family.

Romuald and Konstancya Lukasiewicz family history.

Romuald (Roman) and Konstancya Zona (Constance) Jehorek Lukasiewicz settled in Howard Co. in October 1880. They were among the first settlers of New Posen, settling on the SW1/4 of Section 27, T14, R12. Both were born in Poland; Romuald in Miechów, Grand Duchy of Posen, Prussia, July 30, 1848; Konstancya in Kraków, March 10, 1854 to Martin and Mary (Dymek) Jehorek. Romuald, youngest in his family, attended parochial school, worked on the family farm, and came to the U.S. in May



1872 settling in Momence, Ill. where he worked as a farm laborer. Konstancya immigrated to USA in 1873 with her family, also to Momence. They were married on Nov 26, 1874.

The couple had 14 children: Franzorzeska (Frank), Charles Stanislaus (C.S.), Joseph Ignatz, Alois, Wanda/Vonda Anastacia Mamot, Leo, Anna Pauline Sidel, Clara Antonett Nagorski, Monica/Mamie Knothe, and five children that died in infancy. Frank died at 11 when he was struck by a horse. Romuald and Konstancya homesteaded in Howard County. Wheat, corn, and barley were their main crops. One of the first wheat crops was hauled into the ground the afternoon before harvest. According to son, C.S., Romuald had only one more hailstorm for the next 50 years. Nick and Mike Pawloski worked for them. The

home place was 160 acres and then 40 acres north was bought. "After many years of farming, feeling that his health

The Lukasiewicz family. Front center: Anna Lukasiewicz Sidel (child); Middle row, left to right: Leo, Romuald (father), Clara Lukasiewicz Nagorski, Constance (mother), and Wanda Lukasiewicz Mamot; back row: Alois and Joe. Photo courtesy of Ron W. Sack.

was failing, he decided to retire from active farm life and purchased a beautiful dwelling house in Saint Paul, where he lived a life of ease until called by his Creator to his heavenly reward." Romuald died April 12, 1917 after a long illness. "The deceased was one of our best citizens and will be sadly missed. He was always honest and upright in all his dealings and was also a kind and indulgent father to his children and family." (Obituary, 1917)

Constance died 10 months later on February 14, 1918. "The deceased was a devout Christian, in the very sense which the word conveys, and she so lived to be an inspiration to her children. She made many lasting friends throughout her life, and those who survived her speak of her in words of endearment." (Obituary, 1918)



Romuald (Roman) and Konstancya Zona (Constance) Jehorek Lukasiewicz were pioneers of Howard County. Photograph courtesy of Ron W. Sack.

Historical Society board approves 2004 events schedule.

By Ron Sack

Mena Sprague and I have been busy planning our programs for 2004. In spite of having a shoestring budget, our group is pleased to announce 12 months of activities.

Our first program for 2004 will be on Monday, January 19. It's our annual meeting. This meeting helps us plan for 2004 and will be held in the Community Room of the Saint Paul Library. Please bring your ideas.

On Sunday, February 15, we will be showing the film "Barn Again!" This program tells how barns, one of the most distinctive forms of American architecture, are being restored through a nationwide program. The location for the film will be the Community Library in Saint Paul.

One of our biggest highlights for 2004 will be on Saturday, March 13. Nationally known writer and researcher John E. Carter will present "Photographing the American Dream." The last half of the 19th century saw an incredible migration to America's Great Plains. Thousands of people left ancestral homelands to answer the siren call of free land. This illustrated presentation explores the social and cultural forces that pushed people onto the Plains, and the life they found when they got here. Images by pioneer photographer Solomon D. Butcher bring us face to face with those who broke the sod and settled the Plains in this presentation by Carter, author of an acclaimed study of

Butcher's work and times. The location for this program will be the Community Library in Saint Paul.

Kathy Horak Woitaszewski and I are planning to unveil more Saint

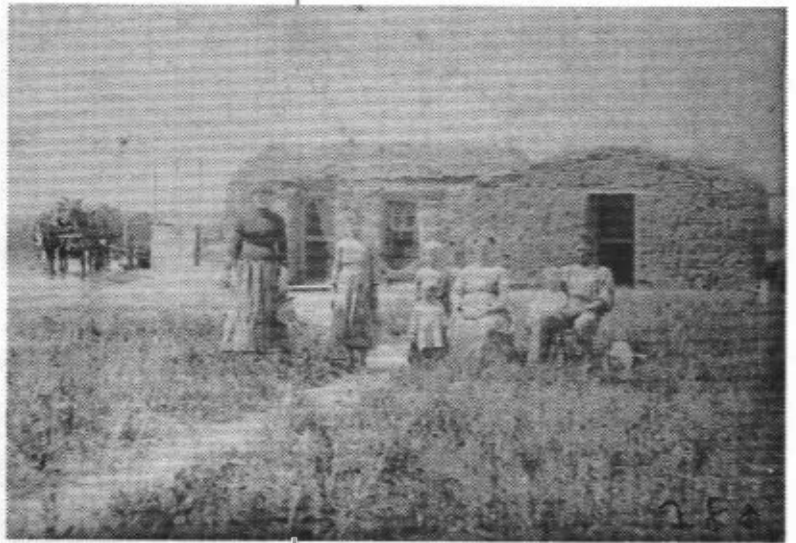
Libery exhibits in the depot. We hope to have most of the Bailman collection on exhibit. I am also in the process of finding more speakers for our Saturday, April 10 presentation on "The History of the German settlement of Saint Libory, Nebraska." Please let us know if you would like to take part in this. The location for this program will be the Union Pacific Depot at the Historical Village in Saint Paul. A special dedication will take place.

On Sunday, May 30 (Memorial Day Weekend), we will have the "Opening of the Howard County Historical Village and Gruber House." Plans are in the works to have some special dedications at the Veterans' exhibits as well. The location for this dedication will be at the Gruber House in Saint Paul.

"Living History at the Village" takes place on Sunday, June 13. Blacksmith Dave Sprague will give demonstrations at the blacksmith shop. The location will be the Historical Village in Saint Paul.

The entire Historical Village will be open on Saturday and Sunday, July 10 and 11 for GCA Days.

On Sunday, August 15, we will have "Living History at the Village...Back to School." Former teachers and students



One of the highlights for the Howard County Historical Society's 2004 program schedule will include "Photographing the American Dream" by John E. Carter. This illustrated presentation explores the social and cultural forces that pushed people onto the Plains, and the life they found when they got here. Images by pioneer photographer Solomon D. Butcher bring us face to face with those who broke the sod and settled the Plains in this presentation by Carter, author of an acclaimed study of Butcher's work and times. The photograph above is believed to be of a Howard County family. It was taken by S.D. Butcher. HCHS photo donated by Lucille Cargill

inform the young and old about what it was like at a one-room school. The location for this program will be the Saint Libory District 41 school at the Historical Village in Saint Paul.

Peggy Lang will be performing on Sunday, September 12. This is one performance you won't want to miss.

We are pleased to be showing the film titled "A Portrait of Maya Angelou" on Sunday, October 17. Join Angelou as she returns to her hometown of Stamps, Arkansas. The location for this film will be the Community Library in Saint Paul.

Sunday, November 28 will be our annual bake sale and Sunday, December 12 will be our popular Holiday Tour of Homes.

Efforts are being made to establish a regional genealogical society. The next meeting will be on at 2:00 p.m. on December 27, at the Saint Paul Library. This meeting will offer instruction on using the web in genealogy research as well as use of the new microfilm reader at the library. Below is a form to help you record your family's history. You can send them to the HCHS at P.O. Box 1, Saint Paul, NE 68873. The forms will then be forwarded to Laura Anderson, who is coordinating this effort.

Family Group Record

Prepared by _____		Relationship to Preparer _____		Date _____		Ancestral Chart # _____		Family Unit # _____	
Address _____		Occupation _____		City _____		State or Locality _____		Religion _____	
Husband									
Born _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
Married _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
Died _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
Buried _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
Wife									
Born _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
Married _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
Died _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
Buried _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
Children									
1. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
2. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
3. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
4. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
5. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
6. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
7. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
8. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
9. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
10. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
11. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		
12. _____	Day _____	Month _____	Year _____	Chapel _____	State or Locality _____	Religion _____	Name of Spouse _____		



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historically speaking

This might be your last newsletter.

If your address label reads "02" you have not paid your dues for 2003 and this will be your last newsletter. Your dues help fund a variety of projects in Howard County, all of which promote tourism and economic development. We thank you for your continued support.

Inside the next issue of this newsletter...

Our "Spring" issue will showcase some examples of outstanding architecture. Please renew today so you don't miss it!



Interior of the W.S. Paul house in Saint Paul, Nebraska. The Paul house is an excellent example of the "Arts and Crafts" bungalow. Look for additional examples of outstanding architecture in our next issue.

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Photograph on mailing side: Interior of the C.S. Lukaszewicz store in Fairwell.