



St. Francis
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

Land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

The Newsletter of the St. Francis Historical Society

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June 2017

The Ultimate Nerds

by Barbara Janiszewski

The Ultimate Nerds. That's how Rick Drezdon described himself, his brother Rory, and Mark Weinhold. Back in August 1967, Rick, Mark, and Mark's brother Chris "blasted off" for a simulated space flight. Rory was on the second flight the following year. Their space ship, Manned Advanced Orbiting Space Ship (MAOSS), was actually a 6' x 8' shed in the Weinhold's back yard. Their goal was to stay in space for 14 days. There were other simulated space flights around the country that year and the boys wanted to beat the previous record of seven days. The idea for simulated space flight came from *Current Science*, a school newspaper that reported on a two-day flight that took place in Georgia.

A Germantown, Wisconsin, flight involved a shed, and as the Weinhold's had a shed in their back yard, they thought this would be ideal for their first simulated space flight. After they received parental permission to use the shed and using makeshift, cheap sources of wood and materials, they fixed it up for their adventure. The cost was \$100, half for materials and half for food. They had food for 40 meals and an estimated 30 gallons of water. They ate canned meats and drank orange juice and supplemented their diet with vitamin pills.

They spent their time building models, playing games, reading, taking turns at the controls, and taping the ship's log. Unfortunately, after four days Chris Weinhold decided he'd rather watch television. The boys couldn't just let him walk out of the space station so they pretended to reach the moon. They sent Chris out to pick up samples of the moon's crust. He almost returned to the craft, his arms filled with plastic bags of earth he had collected from the Weinhold garden. Then he gasped and fell to the ground. Mark looked out the window and saw Chris "looking kind of dead." He was dressed in a plastic raincoat, eye goggles, with plastic bags over his hands and feet. A piece of garden hose that Chris had stuck in his mouth so that he could breathe lay next to him. Rick and Mark decided that Chris' accident had been fatal so they began their return trip without him. They 'splashed down' after 14 days and six hours for a total of 342 hours.

The following year they started another mission. This one was called "The Hope of the World" flight. The estimated cost for the flight was about



Top: Rory outside; Mark pointing;
Rick stooping

Bottom: Rory holding rocket; Rick
standing; Mark with helmet



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\$200 and they had a hard time finding a sponsor. Then the Bay View-St. Francis Jaycees stepped up and agreed to finance the mission. They slapped together a ship in four days and "blasted off." This was to be a 20 day flight with a mission to destroy Asteroid X, a dangerous asteroid on a collision course with the earth. This ship was equipped for three astronauts, Rick and Rory Drezdon and Mark Weinhold. It was located in the Drezdon's back yard. There were advantages on this flight---space walks, experiments, ventilation, and slightly better equipment. The problems they faced were cold food, not enough room, and a leaky roof.

The boys were connected to the outside world with a buzzer system connecting them with "ground control"--- located in the nearby garage. When the buzzer sounded it let the outside world know that they needed to communicate by means of walkie-talkies.

They tried to isolate themselves as much as possible from the outside world, spending their time talking and filling out their flight logs. They tried to exercise as much as they could in the small space craft and sat on lawn lounge chairs, which could be leveled for sleeping. They ended their flight 20 days later for a total of 472 hours in space.

That same summer the Milwaukee Public Museum was trying to raise funds for an addition to the museum, to be called the "James A. Lovell Wisconsin Regional Space Center." The museum had a booth at the Wisconsin State Fair and the boys attended to help promote the planned center. They sold plots of land on the moon. Each of the boys received a deed to a plot. I asked Rick if he thought he would use it someday. He replied, "Who knows?"

Thanks to Christine Cavallaro for identifying the boys in the photo and contacting them.



L to R: RoryDrezdon, Barbara Janiszewski, Rick Drezdon

What's New?

Membership:

Welcome new members: James Hempel, Larry & Katie Kortendick, Rick & Phyllis Drezdon, Rory Drezdon, and Steve Wattawa.

Bike Auction

The day was windy and quite cold and even though there weren't many people at the auction, we sold every single bike. Half of that money went to the police department. Thank you to all who helped. Special thanks to Sal Purpora, owner of Papa Luigi's, for being our auctioneer. Please eat at Papa Luigi's.

Display cabinet outside our office

Come see the German beer steins display by Society board member, Jay Weisner.

St. Francis History Part 2

For those who enjoyed reading Anna Passante's first book on the history of the city of St. Francis, the St. Francis Historical Society is happy to announce the publication of part 2. *From Nojoshing to St. Francis, From Settlement to City, Part 2, The Early Settlers of St. Francis, Wisconsin 1836-1900* will be available for purchase in late August. The early settlers were a courageous lot, and this book documents their struggles to tame the land. Heavily illustrated with family photos, this is a must read book!! (Anna reveals surprising settler stories that include robbery, murder, and immoral behavior.) All proceeds will go to the restoration of the Lake Protestant Cemetery. Preorder your book now!!! Send \$20 + \$4.00 for shipping and handling to the St. Francis Historical Society 3400 E. Howard 53235. Watch for Anna's book talk coming in September.

Tour of the Rotunda Display Cabinets

Deer Creek Intermediate School teacher Ms. Gear and her 4th grade class came to the civic center on April 24 to tour the historical society display cabinets in the rotunda. Charles "Skip" Buechel, Barbara Janiszewski, Jennifer Mertz, and Anna Passante served as docents.

Interviews

Do you know someone who would like to be interviewed by the historical society about their life in St. Francis? call us at 414-316-4391 or st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

General Meeting July 15

After the business meeting, historical society member Dave Goltz will talk to us about the history of the St. Francis Fire Department.

A War to End All Wars

What we now know as World War I was originally known as the Great War or “the war to end all wars.” Of course, we know that was not to be. Another great war broke out in Europe in 1939 and was dubbed World War II, hence the “Great War” became World War I.

World War I broke out in Europe on July 28, 1914, and ended on November 11, 1918. America officially entered the war on April 6, 1917, during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson. A total of 4,734,991 United States soldiers served in that war. Of those, 116,516 lost their lives.¹ To commemorate the 100th anniversary of America’s entry into the war, many communities and historical societies have scheduled special events.

Town of Lake had a number of young men who fought in WWI. Among them were brothers Roland and George Koenig; brothers Jacob Jr. and Frank Jenny; the seven Samen brothers: George, Peter, Joseph, Henry, Nicholas, Matthew, and William; and Charles Vallier. History tends to focus more on the soldiers and less on those who worked for the war effort outside the military ranks. Nurses who volunteered to work in the French field hospitals undeniably saved many lives. Caroline Donsing of Town of Lake was one of those nurses, and her dedication to her profession needs to be recognized along side the young men who sacrificed.

Roland & George Koenig

Roland and George Koenig grew up in the family home at 3849 Packard Avenue, which was then part of Town of Lake in the St. Francis neighborhood. They were the sons of Andrew Koenig and the grandsons of John Koenig. John Koenic built the house at 3849 South Packard Avenue and it still stands. In 2016, the house was designated as a historic building by the St. Francis Historical Society.

Roland was born in 1895. He enlisted in the army in November 1917 at age 22 and trained at Camp Custer, Michigan. He went on to serve as an army engineer with the 310th Engineers, 85th Division Company E and was part of the battle of St. Mihiel and Mesuse-Argonne in France. Before enlisting, Roland was a carpenter for the Newport Company in Carrollville, Wisconsin.² He was mustered out of service with the rank of sergeant in July 1919.

George Koenig was born in 1896. He served in the United States Naval Reserve Force (USNRF).

The Seven Samen Brothers

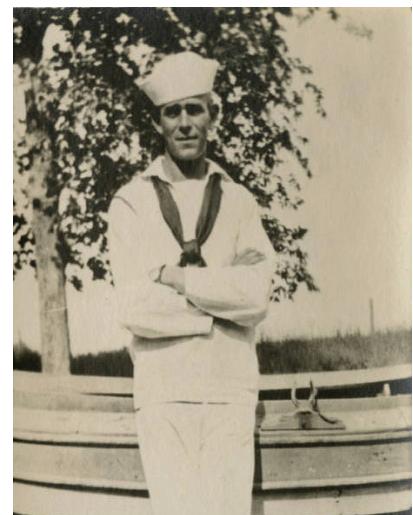
Anton and Johanna Samen had a farm at 2538 East Norwich Avenue in Town of Lake (now St. Francis) where they raised seven sons and one daughter. When America entered the war, four sons enlisted in the army infantry: George, Peter, Joseph, and Henry. Son Nicholas followed but chose the coast guard instead. Son Matthew chose the army medical corps; and son William, the navy. “Of course, I expect to feel lonesome at times,”



Andrew Koenig family
Back row second from left: George (1896-1970)
Back row third from left: Roland (1898-1981)
Photos this page courtesy of Kurt Koenig



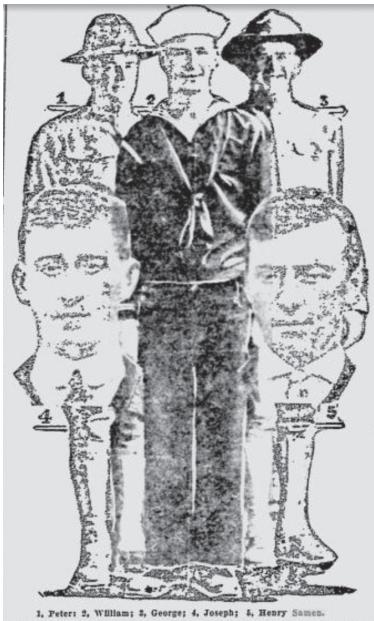
Roland Koenig



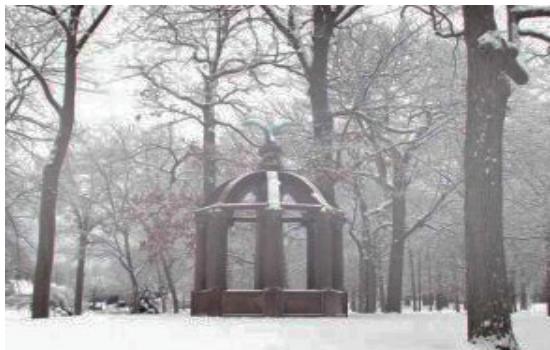
George Koenig

1 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32492.pdf>. Congressional Research Service

2 Carrollville is now part of Oak Creek, Wisconsin.



Newspaper article photo of five Samen brothers



Humboldt Park Kiosk



Charles Vallier gravesite in France

said Johanna in a newspaper article. "However, I would rather have them take all than have any slackers in the family." The parents proudly displayed a service flag with seven stars in their window. Anton Samen said this of his sons:

You would have believed that the boys were going to a ball game instead of war. I would go myself if I could get in. I am of German descent, but I want to see the Kaiser whipped. The way the Germans have mocked and sneered at this county has made my blood hot. Of course, I shall feel the loss of my sons, but I make the sacrifice willingly because I deem it best for my country.

Anton also said the following:

Since my boys went away, I have had to sell my horses, because I have rheumatism half the time, and I'm unable to work the farm as I did when they were here. My daughter has accepted a position in the city, and she helps support her mother and me now. When the war is over, and the boys come back home, I shall buy some more horses and we will start in again. But until then we can get along all right, and wouldn't want them anywhere but where they are.

All of Anton's seven sons survived the war and returned to carry on farming at the family homestead.

Charles Vallier, Jr.

Charles Vallier Jr. was the son of Charles Sr. and the grandson of Joseph Vallier, whose farm is now part of Bay View Park. Charles Jr. worked as a clerk at Illinois Steel and enlisted in the Army in June 1917 to fight in WWI. He served with the 311th Engineers. He was injured and died after surgery at age 30. He is buried at Suresnes American Cemetery in France but is immortalized at the WWI kiosk in Humboldt Park in Bay View.

Jenny brothers

The Jenny family lived at 4424 South Nicholson Avenue, which still stands at that location. Three of Jacob and Annie Jenny's children served in World War I: Jacob Jr., Fred, and Peter.

Jacob Jenny entered service in August 1918 at age 26 and served with the 53rd Coast Artillery Corps on guard duty. He stayed stateside at Fort Greble in Rhode Island, so he saw no action. He was mustered out December 1919. A document entitled "Milwaukee County Chapter, War Mothers of America" said the following about Jacob Jr.: he was honest, faithful, had excellent character.

Fred Jenny entered service on July 5, 1918 and served in the 47th Machine Gun Battalion Company A. At the time of enlistment he was employed as a fireman for the Milwaukee General Construction Company. He remained stateside in Alabama, so he saw no action. He was mustered out February 17, 1919.

Peter Jenny served in the army in the 87th Spruce Squadron at Vancouver (Washington) Barracks. Originally known as the 24th Provisional Squadron, it was formed in June 1918 and that month moved from Vancouver to South Beach, Oregon, where the unit took part in railroad construction. The unit took the name Spruce Squadron because the railroad construction goal was to reach huge stands of spruce trees, which is now Olympic National Park.

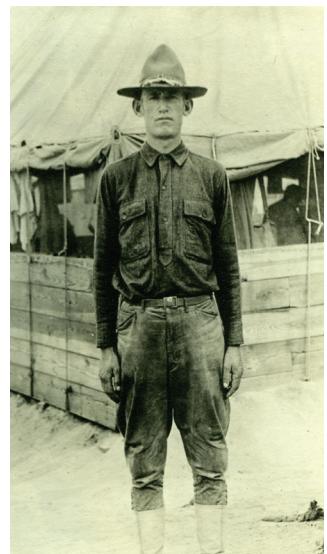
Caroline Donsing, a dedicated nurse

Caroline Donsing was born in 1885 in Town of Lake (now city of Cudahy). She was the daughter of Henry W. Donsing and grandson of William Donsing, whose farm is now part of Sheridan Park. William was a long-time trustee of the Lake Protestant Cemetery in St. Francis.

Caroline was a nurse. She studied at St. Luke's nursing training school in Chicago from 1911 to 1914. From 1914 to 1917, she was a private nurse in Chicago. But in 1917, she decided to help with the war cause and entered Camp Grant for army service. In July 1918, she went overseas with the Base Hospital Unit 14, which was made up of nurses and doctors from St. Luke's and the Michael Reese Hospital of Chicago. When they arrived at Liverpool, England, in August 1918, they joined the 81st division troops, known as the Wildcats, at Cherbourg, France. The base hospital was at Mars Sous Allier. At the French hospital she collapsed as a result of the extreme hardships she underwent. The normal capacity of the hospital was 2,000. From August 1918 to May 1919, the hospital cared for 4,534 sick and wounded; 3,330 were medical cases and 2,204 surgical cases. Although she was suffering from a toxic thyroid which affected her heart, she continued her service. She was relieved from active duty in March 1919 and sent home in April. From that time on, she was no longer nursing due to her illness but had always hoped to return to active service. She never recovered from her illness. She died in 1929 and was buried at St. Mark's Cemetery in South Milwaukee. She never married.



Jacob Jr. served in WWI



Fred Jenny served in WWI

Other Town of Lake WWI Soldiers

Werner Callies
Edward Dominski
Paul Ehlert
Joseph Esser
Rudolph H. Froeming
Joseph Gaidosh
Herman Hochensteiner
John Kaczmarek
Frank Krukard
Paul G. Manske
Nickles Mintz
Edward Pelczynski
Charles G. Puetz
Charles Runge¹
Joseph H. Savin, Jr.
Albert Schlueter
Ignatz Smentek
Wm. F. Walker
Anton Warnimont
Wm. Wegner



Caroline Donsing

¹ He died in the war and his name is on the St. Francis Veteran Plaza.



St. Francis Historical Society
3400 E. Howard Ave.
St. Francis, WI 53235

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Newsletter

Anna Passante
Barbara Janiszewski

Mark Your Calendar

Board Meetings at the Civic Center

June 17, 2017 9:30 a.m.

July 15, 2017 9:30 a.m.

August 19, 2017 9:30 a.m.

General Meeting at the Civic Center

July 15, 2017 9:30 a.m.

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Website: stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org

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