



## John Joseph Giefer Junior

Joseph “Jack Rabbit” Giefer was born on May 16, 1895 in New Trier, Minnesota to John Joseph Giefer Sr (1861-1939) and Elizabeth Weber Giefer (1864-1944). Joseph was one of at least eleven children. The family owned a farm just south of Hastings. In 1917 when Joseph registered for the draft, he was 22 and working as a mailman in Hampton, where his family now lived.

Joseph enlisted on May 28, 1918. He was sent to Camp Lewis, Washington to train with the 160<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 40<sup>th</sup> Division, Company E.

Camp Lewis was established as the training camp for the 91<sup>st</sup> “Wild West” Infantry Division of the National Army (National Guard) which was comprised of inducted men from at least 14 states. He left for France, from Brooklyn, New York in August of 1918 on the SS Nestor. When he arrived in France, he was reassigned to the 308<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 77<sup>th</sup> Division, Company H. The 308<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was best known for the experiences of several of its companies, including Company H, which formed part of the “Lost Battalion” after becoming isolated behind German lines in an attack on the Argonne Forest in October 1918. On October 18, 1918 parts of the 40<sup>th</sup> and 77<sup>th</sup> were sent to an undefended gap between the German and American lines that was actually a deep ravine known as the “pocket”. It was located on the edge of the Argonne Forest near the Aisne River in NE France. Considered Impregnable, the Argonne Forest was a natural stronghold. There they were met with stiff resistance. Then they lost their communication link and were trapped. They held their position in the “gap” without food or water for six full days as they continued to fight. With the capture of this key tactical location, the American forces were able to accomplish what the British and French had not been able to do in four years. Joseph was wounded by shrapnel in this battle on October 6, 1918 and he spent a time in the base hospital. In his own words “I got hit when several pieces of shrapnel hit my head, chest and one of my fingers. I do not remember leaving, I must have been unconscious at the time. The first thing I remember is when they were cutting my boots off at the first aid station. I was in the hospital until the day the Armistice was signed and participated in the parade when we landed in New York City on April 28, 1919.” His unit sailed home on the USS America from Brest, France. He was discharged from Camp Dodge, Iowa on May 18, 1919. He applied for and received a tuition bonus in the amount of \$180.

One year later, Joseph was working as a bookkeeper at Mendota State Bank and living with his parents in Hampton. He married Eva Julia Vitaline Beaudet in Hampton on February 4, 1925. (1897-1983). The couple had four children. Joseph lost his job as Assistant Cashier at the Bank when the depression hit in 1929. In the 1930 census, he is a bookkeeper for a garage in West St Paul, Minnesota. In 1940, he is a timekeeper for a WPA Sewer Project in Mendota Heights where his family now lived. Joseph died on May 6, 1974. He is buried in the St Mathias Catholic Cemetery in Hampton, Minnesota.

*The quote by Joseph was found in the book “Lost Battalion” Survivors from Minnesota and the Northwest” by Carl J Peterson*