

“This was the first time out squad got hit so bad, that many of us had to go to the hospital: but this time four of us got purple hearts,” said Ken. “Doc told me I was the first man that slept while he froze and cut a piece of metal from an arm. I had been on guard with another fellow, and was awake for 24 hours without laying down.”

Kenneth received a Purple Heart. He participated with distinction in three full scale campaigns in the Korean battle, and he was awarded the Combat Infantryman’s Badge for excellent performance of duty in combat, according to a booklet called **Correspondence of the Korean War** by LaVonne Grommesch Schmitt in 2001.

He was returned to duty on June 23, 1951.

Ken also was thinking of home, and the farm. “Boy it sure don’t seem like it is almost time to cut grain already. Here we are here there isn’t nothing planted, What was fields are all bare this year. All I can see is mountains & I sure am getting sick of them. Boy, what I wouldn’t give to plant corn one day again instead of a shitty job like this. But maybe I shouldn’t complain. I am through the worst of it now & I got a good feeling this thing will be over pretty soon.”



Family Photo on Easter 1951: In front-Mariann Theis, LaVonne Grommesch; Back row-Donald Theis, Rose Ann VonBank, Kenneth Theis, Chalres Theis, Leon Theis, Bea Grommesch, and Norman Theis.

On September 9 in North Korea, Ken wrote, “Well I wouldn’t just say everything is so fine, but it will do....Well five month’s this morning I left home & got six month’s to go yet before my time is up. So when I will be home is hard to tell.” Then Ken added “Well, you know how it is. The less I write, the less lies I tell. Is that good enough of an excuse for not writing more(?)”

The next letter to Mom was on November 22, 1951. This was the last letter written. “We were back for dinner though boy what a meal, but I suppose that turkey will have to last until xmas. Tonight we were back to eating C rations again. Good old beans. Ha ha. No wonder it get’s windy over here.” Then Ken mentioned “Well Ma I can’t complain about my job....Assistant platoon sergeant & the first platoon, At least I am where it is nice and warm at night. We build our self’s a fire place in our bunker & bunk’s out of wire & poles. So we really got it pretty nice with a fire all night.”

Kenneth Anton Theis was killed in action on December 2, 1951 near Soksa-ri, Korea, though at the Korean Veteran’s War Memorial in Washington, DC it states that Ken was killed in North Korea. The military records were destroyed in a fire in St. Louis in 1973.

Kenneth Anton Theis funeral was on February 20, 1952 at the Church of St. Mary of the Purification in Marystown. Ken received a second Purple Heart. He was buried next to the church in Marystown.



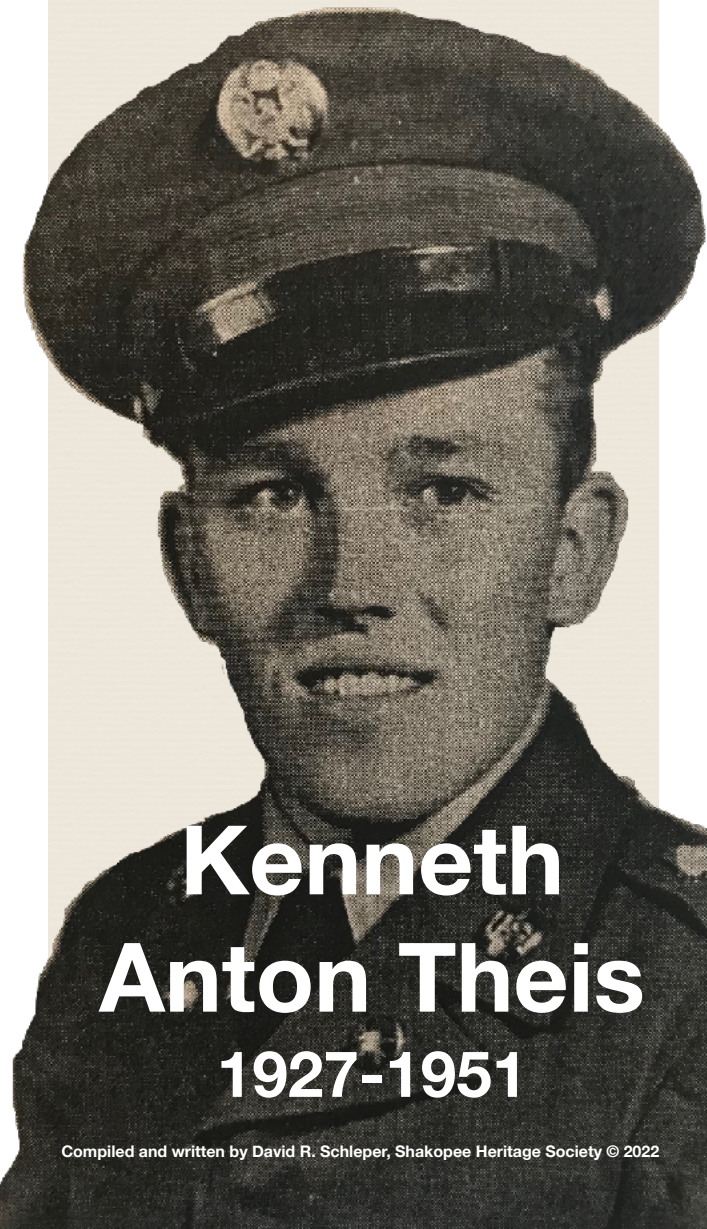
SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY  
2109 Boulder Pointe, Shakopee, MN 55379

952-693-3865

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## SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



# Kenneth Anton Theis

1927-1951





Kenneth Anton Theis was born on November 16, 1927 and grew up in Marystown. His parents were Charles Charley Joseph Theis (1898-1941), son of Charles Carl Theis (1866-1930) and Mary Caroline Pieper (1870-1943.), and Mabel Anna Cress (1906-1996), daughter of Frank Thomas Cress (1872-1955) and Anna Maria Strauss (1878-1934.) Charley and Mabel married on May 19, 1925 at the Church of St. Mary of the Purification in Marystown, and they had five boys: Donald, Norman, Charles, Leon, and Kenneth.

Charley Theis, at age 43, was killed while digging a trench to lay culvert to drain a field on the Theis farm on July 1, 1941. He was in the center of the 9 foot deep trench when the sidewalls caved in and buried him beneath tons of dirt. Mabel Cress Theis eventually married Joseph Grommesch, son of John Grommesch and Mary Ann Geis on March 8, 1943.

On November 30, 1950 Kenneth Anton Theis was drafted in the Korean War. He had basic training at Fort Riley, Kansas, and on April 9, 1951 Kenneth left for Fort Lawton, Washington for overseas duty to Korea.

Kenneth wrote letters to his Ma and his family, along with others. As he wrote his Mom on May 2, 1951, he talked about almost being



On left is Kenneth Anton Theis parents, Charles Charley Joseph Theis and Mabel Anna Cress. On right is Mabel Anna Cress Theis with her second husband, Joseph Henry Grommesch. The family lived outside of Marystown, Minnesota, on a farm. During the Korean War, Kenneth wrote back and forth in a correspondence with his family.



across the ocean. "All I've seen for twelve day's was water &. More water. I never (k)new there would be much of the darn stuff."

He also talked about the food. "Boy the chow really is horse shit on this ship. No wonder the navy don't pray before they eat. They don't even sit down while they eat. And if this is the life of the navy I don't like it. I thought the army was chicken shit. Well, the navy really is. Every-time we get to a navy base or a navy ship we can't get no beer. All they show a guy is water!"

Upon arriving in Korea, Kenneth was assigned as a rifleman in the 32nd Infantry of the famed U.S. Seventh Division.

Kenneth also mentioned what he would like. "Well Ma if you want to send me something to eat you can, but not too much and not something that will melt. One thing you will have to send me is some envelope & writing paper & don't forget & what ever you send, send it airmail."

Of course, the mail was sometimes slow and sometimes fast. In June 14, Kenneth noted "We'll I finally got some mail once, after waiting a month and a half. I didn't get no mail from the 4th of May until yesterday when I got about thirty letters."

He also talked about the sea rations. "There is ...three can's of soup, as they say three great units. The three bread units contain...about four crackers, some jam & coffee, milk, & sugar. That's all packet in one little can. The one for breakfast has got a cocoa bar in it to make cocoa & one for dinner has got candy besides all the rest. So there is eight cans to eat on all day. Besides that there is a little go packet containing cigarettes, gum, water tablets & last of all toilet paper. That all come in the size of a small shoes box. So it is easy to carry."

On June 21, 1951 he was wounded in the chest and arm. In a letter home, Ken noted, "Well, Mom, you asked me in the last letter how the beds are. It was fine last night for the first time in two months. What a fellow doesn't have to go through to get a cot to sleep on, and it was a stretcher at that!"



The family farm near Marystown, Minnesota.