Joseph William Cavanaugh

Joseph Cavanaugh was born on July 1, 1897 in Hastings, Minnesota to Joseph Cavanaugh (1858-1914) and Jessie Louise Wilson Cavanaugh (1877-1936). Joseph was born in Pennsylvania and Jessie in Minnesota. His only brother, Paul died at just one year. Joseph Senior owned a blacksmith shop with two locations in Hastings. He sold this business in 1901 and started a meat market/grocery business called Emerson & Cavanaugh. In 1904, he partnered with Otto Reissner in a grocery business that was still open in Hastings100 years later. Joseph Jr had life pretty good until his father died of pneumonia in 1914. He attended Pillsbury Academy in Owatonna, which was a Baptist Prep School.

He enlists at age 18 with five other Hastings boys on April 15, 1917. They left together to train at Fort Snelling on April 16, 1917. They became part of the First Minnesota National Guard. Joseph also trained in Winona briefly before heading to Camp Cody, New Mexico on October 18, 1917 where he was assigned to 135th Infantry, 34th Division, Company F. They set sail for France from Hoboken on the SS Ortega on. He was stationed in Liverpool, Cadillac France and finally at Vernevil, Nievre, France. His unit arrived in France too late to be sent to the front, as the war was almost over, but he was injured and spent almost a month at Camp Hospital #95. His military papers on file at MNHS do not include the reason. He returned home and was released from Camp Dodge, Iowa on July 21, 1919.

Joseph returned to Hastings and started working at the Hudson Spray Factory as a bookkeeper. His new step-father also worked there as a mechanic. He married Bertha Mamer on October 25, 1919. Their son, John Paul Cavanaugh, who they called Jackie was born August 9, 1922. Around this same time, Joseph was diagnosed with Hodgkins Disease/cancer of the lymphatic system. He was just 25 years old. It was later learned that this type of cancer is caused by Mustard Gas. He spent two years in the hospital trying to win this battle that had no cure.

Joseph died on October 10, 1925 at the Aberdeen Hospital in St. Paul. He is buried at St Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Cemetery in Hastings. His wife never remarried.