Edward Lawrence Kastner

Edward Lawrence Kastner was born 2 August 1889 (some records say 1887 or 1888) in West St. Paul, Dakota County, Minnesota to John Jacob Kastner (1846-1912) and Teressa Raffersberge (1850-1926), both born in Austria. They were in West St. Paul by 1885. Edward attended St. Matthew's Catholic School through the eighth grade. His father worked as a day laborer for the foundry before he died in 1912. The 1910 census said that Teressa was the mother of thirteen children, but only five sons were living. The family lived at 983 Gorman Avenue in West St. Paul.

Edward Kastner was enumerated in the 1910 census while serving as a sailor in the U.S. Navy aboard the battleship USS *Mississippi*, which was stationed in the Philippines. He served as a fireman on the ship for three years and eight months.

After his Naval service and before the World War, Edward worked as a fur dresser for the North Star Fur Dressing Company at Rice and Front Streets in St. Paul. He registered for the draft on 5 Jun 1917 in St. Paul at age 28. He reported that he partially supported his mother, who was by then a widow.

Edward married Etta Melissa Tatum on 18 September 1917 in Hennepin County, Minnesota. She was born in about 1887 in Missouri. That same week, Edward tried to reenlist in the U.S. Navy, but was informed that he needed to provide recommendations before his application could be considered. He and Etta were living at 88 Tilton Street in St. Paul, where he was working as a fur dresser for $50 a week, while Etta worked as a waitress at the café in the Golden Rule department store, where she made only $10 a week, owing to her poor health. She suffered from chronic appendicitis and bronchial problems. The couple appealed to the draft board on the grounds that Edward's income was needed to support Etta, but the dependency claim for exemption was rejected in November 2017. The reason given was that they were married after April 2017 (when the U.S. declared war with the German Empire).

Edward was drafted and inducted into the Army as a private in Company F, 125th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Division on 25 February 1918. He is listed in the book, *Dakota County in the*

World War, as Edward L. “Katsner” of 983 Gorman Street, West St. Paul (his mother’s address). It says he “joined the colors Feb. 27, 1918. Was a private in the 125th Infantry, A.E.F. Also in the Army of Occupation. (Photo not available.)” He was sent to Camp Dodge, Iowa on 11 March 1918. Edward reported in his military service record at Minnesota Historical Society that he had training also at Camp Merritt, New Jersey, and that he embarked from Hoboken, New Jersey on 8 July 1918 and arrived at Brest, France on 18 July 1918.

Edward was stationed in France and Germany, but he was not engaged in any battles. A roster of Company F of the 125th Infantry dated at midnight, 30 November 1918 stated that Kastner, along with Private Louis Thorwarth, “returned from desertion on the 25th and (were) attached for rations.” His name was among a list of many privates who had deserted or were lost, reassigned, or sick. Another soldier was listed as having shot himself. Following the War's end, the division served in the Army of Occupation in Germany, commanded by Maj. Gen. William Lassiter. The division was inactivated on 5 April 1919.

However, records show that Edward was dishonorably discharged from service on 27 February 1919 by reason of a general court martial order while stationed in Germany. He was subsequently confined to the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where he was released on 20 November 1919. This may have been due to his absence without leave, which was recorded as occurring from “24 April through 6 May 1918.” It appears that his absence occurred from Camp Upton, New York, before his regiment shipped overseas, but there is no further explanation of the circumstances.

After the War, Edward returned to Minnesota. He and Etta traveled to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada in February 1920 to look for work. He gave his usual occupation to border crossing authorities as fur dresser, and said that he lived in at 683 St. Peter Street in St. Paul, and was Catholic. In the 1920 census, taken a few months later, they were listed as lodgers at 131 St. Peter Street in downtown St. Paul. Edward was a dresser for a fur factory and Etta worked as a waitress in a restaurant.

However, by 1930 the couple had separated; Etta lived at No. 49 Iglehart in St. Paul and was listed in the census records as divorced. She continued to work at a restaurant. In the 1930 census, Edward was living alone at 1010 Iglehart Avenue, where he owned his home and his marital status was given as single. His occupation was listed as “fur dresser, fur factory.” It said he was unemployed on the most recent working day. In 1940, Etta “Tatum” lived at 1010 Iglehart and said she was widowed. But by 1942, when Edward registered for the WWII draft, he stated that he and Mrs. Edward Kastner were both living at 1010 Iglehart, and that he worked for Western Fur Dressing at 266 State Street in St. Paul as a fur dyer.

Edward L. Kastner died 10 February 1969 at Bethesda Hospital in Ramsey County, Minnesota. He was 81 years old, and he and Etta lived at 1032 Thomas Avenue. Edward is buried in Calvary Cemetery in St. Paul.