

With the recent remembrance of the end of WW1, I felt compelled to rewrite the story of my dad's Uncle De. Joseph De Arozena was born in 1890 in Texas. He was the youngest in the family, four years younger than my grandfather Jesse. There were two older sisters, Frances and Rosa. Their father, John Demetrios, had grown up in the small Spanish Basque town of Arrancudiaga, not too far from Bilbao. Their mother was Irish. The family was proud of their European- Basque ancestry (Not Mezkins! They emphasized.) Joe graduated from the University of Arizona School of Mines with a degree in engineering.

He served in WW1 in the Army Corp of Engineers, 107 Corp, and rose to the rank of captain. He was sent to France. After the deaths of Frances and Rosa, My parents were elected to go to El Paso, Texas to sort their belongings. They were spinster school teachers and had taught for many years on Indian reservations. We have a good assortment of pictures depicting their lives. They had collected and saved all sorts of things. There were stuffed closets, stacks of nicely washed cottage cheese cartons and instant coffee jars. There were bundles of used envelopes with stamps. Perhaps they used these things for projects with their students. There were also several unfinished needlework projects which came to me since I am the seamstress of my generation. There were boxes and boxes of family memorabilia.

There was an entire box containing Joe's war papers. We have his formal portrait showing a very handsome, serious young soldier. We have a medal that he earned. His formal discharge paper is there- authorized by Woodrow Wilson. His dog tag is just a small aluminum disc that he wore on a brown cord around his neck. There was also a small wooden cigar box full of photographs.

I think his unit must have had a full time photographer. The pictures were dated from Sept to Dec of 1918. There are pictures of tanks and groups of mules and countryside with burned trees. There are groups of soldiers working or in formation. There are many pictures of "Chippy Road" which must have been one of their biggest projects. They were printed as postcards so the soldiers could send them home. We have two identified pictures of Joe. In one he is in line to get some shots. The message to his sister says "Vaccination in left arm- typhoid in right." The other card pictures a group of soldiers digging a shoulder deep trench. Joe is squatting on the edge with a bandage on his head. The note says "Digging trenches. Just been scalped by shovel in the hands of a

lawyer. Very poor shoveler to say the least." I have had these cards and other items framed to tell this story.

In the 1950's we took one of our first family vacations. We drove our new 1949 Chevy to Arizona. We went to the Grand Canyon, then down toward Phoenix to the little town of Wickenburg. My father knew Joe (Uncle De) lived there. He had learned this from family conversation. I doubt there had ever been direct contact. He called the number and asked for Uncle De. The woman on the phone burst into tears. "How could you be so cruel?" she asked, "He died in February." My father was shocked and apologised because he hadn't know this. He told her who he was and she invited us to her tiny home. When she saw my dad, she cried some more. "You look so like him- and your eyes are the same color." We managed to clear off enough room to sit down for a visit in her cluttered house. She gave my dad some of De's things. She told him how De had worked as a Civil Engineer for the State of Arizona. He had been involved in the construction of the big bridge in town over the Hassayampa River on Highway 60. She and De are buried in the sunny desert cemetery in Wickenburg. They have official veteran headstones.

I so appreciate the box of pictures. It makes the war and the lives of the soldiers real to me - 100 years ago.