

My Grandfather - August Kauzlarich

By RICIGS member Fred Polich, of Coal Valley, IL

The following information is about August Kauzlarich, my maternal grandfather. August died in a coalmine on July 4th, 1918 in Cincinnati, Appanoose County, Iowa, while trying to rescue two young boys. He was awarded the Carnegie Medal for Heroism posthumously as a result of that rescue attempt.

Here is a photo of August Kauzlarich, and the Carnegie Medal that was presented to his widow.



As a result of this heroic act, August's widow, my grandmother Antonija (Anna) Raskie Kauzlarich, received compensation for her children.

Without this compensation, life would have been very difficult for my grandmother to raise my mother, Victoria Kauzlarich Polich, and her nine siblings.

Following is the newspaper article describing this event, taken from Centerville Daily Iowegian and Citizen, Friday, July 5, 1918.


“DOUBLE TRAGEDY OF FOURTH COST LIVES OF TWO IN OLD AIR SHAFT AT CINCINNATI (Note: The Kauzlarich surname was spelled a variety of ways throughout this article.)

Cincinnati was the scene of a double tragedy July 4, that is especially sad as well as tragic, a 14-year-old boy losing his life in the air shaft of an abandoned mine and his rescuer, the father of a family of eight children, likewise being overcome and suffering a like fate. The boy who lost his life was the 14-year-old son of Tony Kovicich, and the one who lost his life trying to rescue him was August Kausaleric who lived perhaps 200 yards from the shaft.

The tragedy occurred at the air shaft of the old Thistle Mine No. 2, which has not been operated for the past four years. It is located about two miles northeast of Cincinnati and the air shaft

is on the 50-acre farm of the man who lost his life in it. A companion of the boy who lost his life rushed to the Kauzalaric home for aid when he saw his friend drop on the first stair landing, not more than six feet from the surface. Rushing to the shaft, Mr. Kauzalaric saw the boy there in full light so near the top and not thinking but what he could quickly bring him to the surface, hurried down the steps after him. Getting the body on his back, he was ready to start upward, when he, too, was seen to topple over, and both bodies fell to the next landing not more than six feet farther down. The stairs run around the shaft, being in eight foot lengths, the vertical distance between landings being about six feet.

Seeing that both were dead, and fearing to risk other lives, the bodies were not recovered until about 6:30 when Dr. C. S. James arrived from Centerville with an oxygen apparatus and made the descent to the bodies. Even then there came near being another serious situation developing as there was a slight leak somewhere which caused the doctor to become dazed just as he had fastened the rope around the first body. The doctor was able to get out, however, and the apparatus was repaired and the next rescue made.

<p>16332 August Kauzlarich, aged forty-two, coal miner, died attempting to save Vincel L. Kovacevich, aged fourteen, school-boy, from suffocation, Cincinnati, Iowa, July 4, 1918. Kovacevich was overcome by gas on a stairway in an air-shaft of an abandoned coal mine, nine feet below the top of the shaft. Kauzlarich descended the stairway to Kovacevich and started to return with Kovacevich on his shoulder, but he was overcome after taking a few steps. Two hours later Kauzlarich and Kovacevich were removed by a man wearing a mask, but neither could be resuscitated.</p>	<p>Bronze Medal to the widow and until further notice \$45 a month with \$5 a month additional on account of each of seven children while the child is dependent upon her and not over sixteen, no benefits to extend, however, beyond fourteen years or the date of the widow's remarriage.</p>
	

Before Dr. James was sent for, one of the men who had gathered at the mine tried to go down with a rope about him, but so strong was the gas that he soon gave the distress signal and was pulled out just in time. A light that was

let down went out within an arm's length of the surface, showing the deadliness of the dread black damp.

The death of the man who risked and lost his life to save another is particularly sad. He is the father of eight children, the oldest of whom has not yet gone to work for himself being 15 years old. By industry and thrift, the family was paying for the 50-acre farm on which they lived, the father working in the mine. The mother is reported to be in delicate health at the present time, adding to the feeling of deep sympathy the public has for the unfortunate family. It is understood that the Thistle Coal Company will at once provide work for the oldest boy as a driver at good

wages, and with the aid of the widow's pension the family will be able to maintain itself.

The boy who lost his life lives at the same camp, there being some other children in the family. It is understood that boys in that locality have been in the habit of playing about the shaft, and at times have ventured down it, and previously went even in -- it was on a dare that the boy went into the shaft the afternoon of the Fourth and never came out alive.

It was but a short time till an immense crowd assembled at the shaft. Word was telephoned to Centerville, and the mayor's office was called on thinking the firemen might have some rescue apparatus. It was thought at that time that the parties in the shaft might yet be recovered in time to revive them, so great speed was urged. David Dinning was called at his home, George Dinning had just driven up from Cincinnati, and they hurried to the shaft at once, thinking the men were still alive and it being ropes or other apparatus that was wanted, and they sped across country, arriving in 10 minutes after starting from Centerville, taking the short route by Shawville.

When it was found that the parties in the shaft were past all help, arrangements were made for Dr. James to bring an oxygen apparatus from Centerville and by the time it was fixed up and the bodies taken out about three hours had elapsed, the accident being shortly after 3 o'clock, and the recovery after 6 o'clock. The air shaft is about a half mile north of the main shaft. It is about 100 feet deep. A fence had been placed around it for protection, but this did not keep out those of a curious disposition, who wished to look into it and explore it. The shaft was large enough that it was light down for a considerable distance."

In 2010, the Carnegie Commission sent me a Carnegie Medal Awardee bronze medallion to attach to my grandfather's grave. This is a photo of me at his gravesite in Oakland Cemetery, Centerville, Iowa.

