

# LaCroix

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the truck in the dead of night.

"I was waiting for the guy on the truck with a 50-caliber machine gun to open up fire, but he didn't. He laid down in the box with the rest of (the soldiers)," LaCroix recalled. "When we got about up to (the enemy), I swerved off like we were going to go into the ditch, so they quit firing on that side. The other side kept firing and hit the officer in the hip. We went on through without them stopping us. We were only about 1 1/2 miles from the hospital. They got (the officer) out, and I had blood all over me. I didn't even realize I had shrapnel in my arms and that a bullet grazed me."

If not for the maneuvering to make the enemy think he had been hit, LaCroix doubts he would have survived the experience.

"They quit firing, so we went on through," he said. "The truck looked like a flour sieve."

LaCroix was later

awarded a Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his actions.

After finishing work in the Philippines, the 242nd was shipped out to the waters near Tokyo.

"We were sitting in the harbor waiting to be sent in when they dropped the atomic bomb," LaCroix said. "(The Japanese) surrendered, and from there we took our equipment into Tokyo."

"They took us over to Hiroshima and showed us (what was left)," he added. "It was a bad deal. It was all black. There was nothing for miles and miles. They wouldn't let us get out of the vehicle. They just drove us through it."

LaCroix couldn't say whether the United States did the right thing by dropping atomic bombs and does not cast judgment upon those who made the decision.

"I wouldn't wish (an atomic bomb) upon anybody," he said. "But it's one of those things — in war, they don't care for anything. I was glad it was over with. Three years was enough of that. I told them that if they ever let me out, they'd never see me back again."

While LaCroix has heard some veterans cast aspersions upon civilians and others who didn't have to fight in World War II, he sees no reason to do that.

"If he didn't have to go, I'm glad he didn't. I wouldn't wish it upon anybody to have to do that," LaCroix stated. "A lot of (veterans) had the hate in them, I guess. They figured because they were in, they should take them all. But there had to be somebody back here to run the world, too. I hated to have to go myself. But there was no way out."

For the better part of a decade upon returning state-side, LaCroix said he was not his old self.

"It took me eight to nine years before I really could say I felt safe about myself. I was always fearing this and fearing that," he stated. "I'd think of things and wake up at night. Any little noise would irritate me."

LaCroix married his late wife, Darlene, six months after coming home and says he doesn't know how she dealt with him in those early years. They raised six children.

"My wife would wake me up and say, 'Bud, what are you trying to do? What are you trying to do?'" he said. "It was hard. I still catch myself dreaming away at stuff. That

was 70 years ago."

In September, LaCroix will turn 90.

His parents trucked out of Lindy, and LaCroix was a trucker himself until age 65.

"It's a dog's life, but it's a living," he joked.

Some of his children and grandchildren are still carrying on that family tradition, according to LaCroix — just as many of his family members have or are serving in the military.

"I think we did our part," he said.

While LaCroix has visited the World War II memorial in Washington, D.C., and found his name, he never did get back to Guam, the Philippines or Japan as he had hoped.

"I always said I'd like to take a trip to go (to Asia), but I never saved the money to be able to do that," he said.

LaCroix has lived in Yankton for almost 24 years. He said he enjoys attending Memorial Day events but generally tries to avoid remembrances of the war.

"It makes memories come back," he stated.

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# Memorial

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"We have 305 individual donors, and two major donors so far," she said. "We received \$10,000 each from the South Dakota Community Foundation and the Dwight Wood American Legion Post No. 142 in Springfield."

The Springfield Veterans Memorial committee operates under the auspices of the Legion post.

When completed, the monument will incorporate a number of interesting characteristics, said Bob Luken of Yankton, who is working with the project.

"The Springfield Veterans Memorial is unique in not only shape, color and size, but also location," he said, referring to the Missouri River overlook.

The monument includes a spire that towers over the rest of the monument, which uses a sloping feature for the granite tablets, Luken said.

"The spire, made of variegated gray granite, will stand 22 feet tall and adorn a lit top so that it will be seen from miles away," he said. "The polished black granite panels will butt up to the spire on the south end, start at 8 foot tall and slope to 5 foot tall."

The sloping tablets carry a symbolism, Allen said.

"The tops of the granite tablets are designed so they represent the undulation of the hills and scenery (surrounding the site)," she said. "There's also the more spiritual level of the broken lives caused by war and conflict."

Some physical changes will be made at the Terrace Park site, Allen said.

"The monument will be located west of the cannon that's in the park," she said. "The cannon will be incorporated into (the memorial site),

but it will have to be moved. We want as much as possible to have those driving into Springfield on Walnut Street to look straight ahead and see the monument as they drive into town."

The monument will be seen far beyond Springfield, Allen said. "With the spire and lighting, you can see it from the Nebraska side (of the Missouri River)," she said.

With the Springfield committee making the \$50,000 commitment, the granite order is on its way, Luken said.

"We are currently having the granite quarried, and the rough blocks should be ready to process later this winter," he said. "The imagery on the memorial will include (military) service emblems on the spire, photos of local veterans lasered onto the black granite panels, along with more than 1,500 names engraved."

The Springfield memorial committee has collected 1,345 veterans' names so far for placement on the monument, Allen said. The committee members continue to seek more veterans' names and history through their Facebook page, public appearances and the newsletters for the now-closed University of South Dakota-Springfield.

"We are trying to reach out to the families that are no longer around here," she said. "We want the names of any person who has ever had a military connection with Springfield. We are really working hard to identify all the military, including those from the college."

The Facebook page has featured a different veteran each day along with photographs of the cemetery markers for veterans, Allen said. The committee has received positive feedback for those features, creating even more interest in the veterans memorial, she said.

"We have the 1,345 (veter-

ans') names, but we have allowed space for more in the design of the foundation," she said. "We have anticipated putting in reinforcements so that down the road, if needed, we can add another black granite tablet."

Thanks to technology, the memorial committee could choose to make it possible for visitors to hear the veterans' stories, Luken said.

"Eventually, the Springfield Veterans Memorial committee will have a website and data base created containing each of the veterans' personal stories," he said. "Visitors can access the information and photos using their smart phones while visiting the memorial."

Allen sees tremendous educational opportunities through both hard copy and possibly the smartphones.

"We have been thinking about putting together information for teachers and schoolchildren as they take a little walk along the monument during a field trip," she said. "They can point to a name and learn (that person) was a fighter pilot who did two tours of duty in Vietnam. That way, the (veterans') names have some kind of life behind them."

Springfield holds a proud history of military service dating back to pioneer days, Allen said.

"Our cemeteries go back to Civil War and pre-Civil War days," she said. "We even have the graves of some of (General George) Custer's men. Five of them died during Custer's first encampment here."

In more recent times, the Bon Homme County community had a South Dakota National Guard unit, she said.

With Monday's announcement, Allen hopes fundraising efforts gain new momentum.

"One fundraiser asks people to buy a yard of concrete, which costs \$100," she said. "The donations for the concrete are pretty significant. We have the test borings done on the site to make sure that the soil could hold the weight. We have a fair amount of site preparation, and the donations for concrete are very important."

Two raffles are also under way. The first raffle offers the prize of a hunting rifle, with the name drawn during Springfield's Fourth of July celebration. The other raffle represents a partnership with the Tabor American Legion, which is hosting the American Legion State B baseball tournament. The proceeds from the joint raffle will benefit the Springfield Veterans Memorial and help defray the baseball tournament expenses.

With the order placed for the granite, Allen sees the project moving full speed ahead. She expressed gratitude for the backing received from Springfield and far beyond the city limits.

"With the support of people, we have done unbelievable things," she said.

When completed, the monument will be well worth the effort, Allen predicted.

"We had thought in terms of four years (for finishing the monument), but it will take five," she said. "When we devoted ourselves to a project of this size, we knew that could be the case."

"But even if it takes six years, that's OK. It's a very special thing, to have this monument for all the veterans who have done so much."

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at [twitter.com/RDockendorf](https://twitter.com/RDockendorf). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net/).

# Burglary

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there. I heard him say that, went around and got (Roe) and took him to the office."

Subsequently, a search warrant was executed on Roe's residence in the Lakeside Mobile Home Park, which is just south of TJ's Mini Mart.

Lottery tickets and bags of tobacco from the TJ's burglary were recovered at the home,

according to Rothschild. The clothes the suspect was wearing in security footage taken of the burglary were also found.

The estimated value of the stolen items was less than \$400.

According to Vlahakis, Roe is on parole and has a criminal history that includes 35 various offenses.

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