



Albert J. Kotich **76-43**

Second Lieutenant, U.S. Army

Service # O-522613

**862nd Field Artillery Battalion
63rd Infantry Division**

Entered the Service from: Colorado

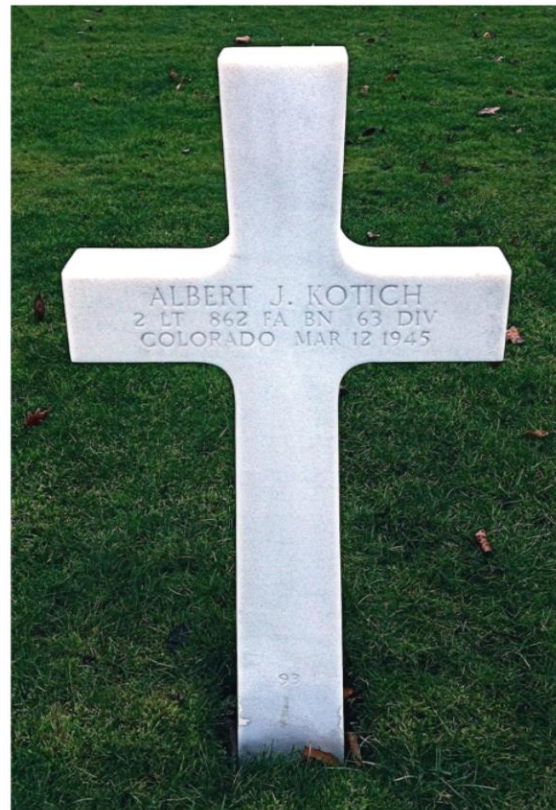
Died: 12-March-1945

Buried at: Plot C Row 27 Grave 93

Lorraine American Cemetery

St. Avold, France

Awards: Bronze Star, Purple Heart



Kotich Saved Children But At High Cost

Second Lt. Albert J. Kotich of Fort Collins, an observation officer of the 862nd Field Artillery battalion attached to the Sixty-third division, didn't like to make war on children, even German children.

His battery was firing at an enemy force holed up in a small valley town just below his observation post. Now and then small children and other civilians would appear in the village streets.

So Lieutenant Kotich had his battery cease firing until they disappeared. He did this several times on March 12, 1945.

Seen by Sniper

This was noted by a German sniper, who took advantage of the presence of the children to crawl to a spot from which he could see the young officer's observation post.

The sniper fired. His single bullet instantly ended the life of the young American who didn't like to war on children.

That was the story of her son's death in battle which came yesterday to Mrs. Mary M. Kotich of 307 Smith street, in a letter from Capt. Elric S. Pinckney, apparently the officer commanding the battery of which Lieutenant Kotich was a member.

The officer's letter of sympathy to the sorrowing mother said:

"In the death of your son, I feel that I have lost a great personal friend, and that the country has lost an outstanding officer. His bright smile and cheerful word were always an inspiration to those of us who were fortunate enough to know him.

German Trick

"Albert was killed by a single bullet, fired by a German sniper from a small town in a valley just below his observation post. The bullet lodged in his neck, and the end came almost instantly; there was no pain or suffering.

"On several occasions Al had stopped firing into this town because civilians and small children appeared on the streets.

"The German took advantage of the protection afforded by the presence of these children to get close enough to do his work...."

"At times like this, I think all of us who remain over here realize what a small bit we are contributing for our common cause. Those who have given their lives or have been permanently disabled, and you at home

who have lost your sons, are the ones who are making the great sacrifice. I only hope and pray that He will guide us to a peace that will be everlasting, so that Al's life and the lives of thousands of others will not have been spent in vain."

Lieutenant Kotich, a native of Greeley, was 23 and a 1943 graduate of Colorado A & M college, and was commissioned in August of 1943. A posthumous award of the Bronze Star medal was made for him, in recognition of his services from Jan. 28 to March 12, the day of his death.

It is believed here that his last battle was in the German Saarland in the Rhine valley. Captain Pinckney wrote that full military honors were given at his burial in a United States military cemetery in the Fauilles mountain region of eastern France.