

Seniors Shine: Allan Vitch leads a gifted life



Allan Vitch on his wedding day (submitted photo), and today, at the young age of 94.



BY CHRISTOPHER WARNER

According to the latest Census Bureau, the most common last names in the U.S. are largely of European origin. These surnames, from Anderson to Zivoinovic, often reveal insightful clues about an ancestor's heritage, birthplace or occupation.

But not always. Just ask 94-year-old Lewiston resident Allan Vitch.

As the story goes, his grandparents, Domenic and Bridget Vecchio, emigrated from Italy to Niagara Falls, Canada, in the late 19th century. And not unlike legions of other newcomers to North America, they had their last name anglicized and shortened, thus "Vecchio" became "Vitch."

Two generations later, Allan and his parents relocated to Western New York, settling in the Colonial Village area of Lewiston in 1941. Louis Vitch (Allan's father) found work as a lathe operator for the Carborundum Co. — a massive industrial manufacturing plant that at one time employed roughly 20% of the Niagara County workforce.

After graduating from LaSalle High School in 1947, Allan enrolled at the University at Buffalo and set his sights on a career in law. Those plans, however, had to be put on hold after receiving a letter from Uncle Sam in 1953.

"I got my draft notice while I was in law school," Allan recalled. "But the local draft board delayed it until I graduated."

He eventually spent 16 weeks at Fort Dix in New Jersey for basic training before shipping out to Europe.

Though the Korean War had recently ended in a stalemate with the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement, escalat-

ing tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union resulted in the so-called Cold War, with an increased buildup of American troops. Allan was initially assigned a heavy weapons unit (mortars) with the 350th Infantry Regiment at Camp Roeder in Salzburg, Austria; he later transferred to the JAG (Judge Advocate General) Corps, which specialized in legal matters for Army command.

Allan's deployment to Europe provided a bittersweet opportunity to visit the gravesite of his uncle, Flight Sgt. Michael Vitch. While serving in World War II with the Royal Canadian Air Force, the 20-year-old bombardier was shot down and killed in a Handley Page Halifax bomber during an operation over Germany. All six crew members were interred at the Hanover War Cemetery.

Upon his discharge from the Army, Allan returned home and became a licensed attorney in the state of New York. He also fell in love.

"Her name was Margaret, but everyone called her Daisy," Allan said.

The couple married in 1958 and soon started a family, naming their first-born Michael. The Vitch brood would eventually grow to six children, followed by 12 grandchildren.

As Allan steadily built his law practice, Daisy earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in education from SUNY College at Buffalo. She then taught special education in Niagara Falls and later went on to teach at Stella Niagara in Youngstown.

Among Allan's many clients over the years included a man who achieved infamy as a Niagara Falls daredevil. On July 15, 1961,

William Fitzgerald (aka Nathan Boya) captured international attention when he launched an enlarged rubber ball that he called the "Plunge-o-Sphere" along the upper Niagara River above Chippawa, Ontario. The New York City resident managed to survive the 167-foot drop over the Horseshoe Falls, becoming the first African American to accomplish the feat. Workers from the Maid of the Mist Boat Co. recovered the slightly battered vessel and towed it to the Canadian landing where Fitzgerald was then arrested for stunting.

Then and now, Allan offers this bit of sage advice for anyone — in or out of the courtroom: "Keep your mouth shut and your ears open."

Following his retirement, Allan kept active playing golf as a member of the Frontier Golf Club in Youngstown. He and Daisy also enjoyed dining out at popular spots such Fortuna's and The Como.

"Everyone went to The Como," Allan said.

For those of a certain generation, the immense popularity of Frank Sinatra is beyond measure. To wit, Allan lists "Old Blue Eyes" as his favorite entertainer of all time, and considers "The Manchurian Candidate" as his top movie.

"Whenever it's on TV, I always make plans to watch it," Allan said.

Anything else you'd like to say to our readers? "For a kid born in Niagara Falls, Canada, in 1930, I've lived a gifted life."

HAL to hear about Civil War in Western New York

Information Provided by the Historical Association of Lewiston

The Historical Association of Lewiston will welcome Steve Teeft, who will present "The Civil War in Western New York" at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 24, at the Lutheran Church of the Messiah Fellowship Hall, 915 Oneida St.

New York state played a pivotal role in the War of the Rebellion, better known as the American Civil War. It had provided manpower, supplies and leadership; covering each theater of the war, and had a presence of some sort in every area of the war.

New York had also provided training areas throughout the state, including the training of hundreds of future officers who graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, to the hundreds of military training areas, camp and forts.

The supplies that New York state was able to produce and manufacture was incredible —

from military arms, ammunition from our various armories and factories, to the steel foundries that produced armor and technology for ironclads. The recruitment of soldiers for the Union Army was vital, recruiting just under a half a million men for the war effort.

New York also fell victim to conspirators, riots, sabotage and rebellion — and you would be surprised that the state had its small share of those who supported the Confederacy, including a number, although small in number who served the South.

This state also would be a holder of the most prisoner of war camps, more than any other state in the union, including the controversial one in Elmira.

During the conflict, New York would also be a place for healing, medicine and medical care, through the various hospitals, medical training centers and later soldiers' home, such as the Soldiers hospital & home for Union Veterans in Bath.

New York supplied over 400,000 men, tons of war supplies, spending nearly \$38 million in resources and well over \$100 million in soldiers pay, recruitment and bounties.

So much history to cover in so little time — won't you come and

join us as we cover an overview on these topics?

Local historian Teeft, director of the only Civil War museum in New York, the Echoes Through Time Learning Center & Civil War Museum, will present some interesting facts and stories about the part New York played in our American Civil War.

This community event is free and open to all, but donations are greatly appreciated to help support our museum. Refreshments will be served.

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To all Town of Lewiston Residents, from the Town of Lewiston Fire Prevention Bureau



October is Fire Prevention Month and we would like to remind all residents to check their smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. This includes changing batteries or possibly replacing the detectors all together. We are also asking all residents who have a hydrant in front of their house or on their property to try to help maintain it. This would involve keeping the hydrant clear of debris such as tree foliage, shrubs or any other landscaping within a three-foot circle around the hydrant. It is important to keep the hydrants clear so firefighters can easily spot them at any time of day or night. With the winter months approaching we thank you in advance for helping to maintain the same three foot circle clear of snow around the hydrants to better assist firefighters in case of an emergency. Thank you for your cooperation and please be safe.

SANBORN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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 2660 Saunders Settlement Rd. (Rt. 31)

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Sciatica, A Pain in the Butt

Your sciatic nerve is your longest and largest nerve. It is made up of five roots that leave your low back, join in the pelvis and then travel to the muscles and joints of your thigh, knee, calf, ankle, foot and toes.

If your sciatic nerve becomes inflamed, the condition is called sciatica. The pain can be intense and often follows the path of the nerve. It can also radiate to your back or even your hips! Along with burning, sharp pains, you may also feel nerve sensations such as pins-and-needles, tingling, prickling, crawling sensations or tenderness. Your leg could also feel numb.

Like most other conditions, sciatica has a wide variety of causes. The most common is from an unhealthy spine that is misaligned or distorted or has protruded discs, which can irritate the sciatic nerve causing sciatica. The piriformis muscle in the buttocks can also irritate the sciatic nerve to create pain in the buttock, hip or leg.

Chiropractic spinal adjustment improves spinal alignment relieving the stress on the spinal nerves, joints and discs. The piriformis muscle can be helped by addressing the five factors that influence muscle function.

So if you are ready to get rid of your "pain in the butt": Call(716)754-9039. Rose Chiropractic, P.C. is located at 435 Ridge St., Lewiston.

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 Village of Lewiston Residents
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