

Photo history of war vets

Couple look far, wide for pictures of Bezanson servicemen

'They never even thought about it. And here their children are grown up, and their grandchildren, and they've only got the one or two pictures of themselves in uniform.'

— Allie Weegar

By ADRIA GAMBLE

History is coming alive for descendants and friends of war veterans in Bezanson.

A dedicated couple have designed a display of photographs of local men and women who were in the service.

Earl and Allie Weegar have collected more than 100 pictures, and there are more coming every day. This summer they will present them to the West Smoky Legion No. 244 to be displayed for all to see and remember.

They have invested their time and money to create five large frames with 20 pictures in each, and the love involved is apparent in the beautiful wood frames and carefully cut out holes for each picture.

The Weegars started their search for pictures last March, after thinking about it for nearly seven years.

"We talked about it for a long time," Earl said.

They said it was hard at first to get people interested, until they caught on to what they were trying to do.

Finding the photographs became much easier as more people found out about the project and gave the Weegars leads.

Sometimes they would follow a lead for a while — only to find that people had passed away or families had moved on to different places — and it would seem that they had hit a brick wall.

"Then someone else would say, 'Oh, I know where their daughter or granddaughter is, maybe you could check with her,'" Allie said.

She also said that the requests for a copy of a picture has prompted some families to have a negative made and copies sent to their whole family.

"They never even thought about it," Allie said. "And here their children are grown up, and their grandchildren, and they've only got the one or two pictures of themselves in uniform."

Each picture in the display has a gold plaque underneath, and one smaller frame has plaques only; they wait for a possible photograph, and if it never comes, the plaque ensures their name still won't be forgotten.

"Without everyone's help, we never could have gotten this far," Allie said.

"Everyone has started to help us, when



Photo by Adria Gamble

Earl and Allie Weegar, and Allie's son Keith Patterson (top left), have put many hours into the collection of photos.

they realized what it was."

"And this is for the hard to find," Earl laughed, pointing to a collection of bills in his briefcase. If the family is sure there is no photograph, they will donate money towards a plaque, which the Weegars say is the most costly part.

The rest of the supplies — like wood, glass and cardboard — they purchased on their own. The carefully constructed frames were built by Ralph Selke, who took pains to match corner patterns

without wasting wood.

Then Allie stained them by hand, turning the plain wood into a beautiful golden color.

Among the men the have plaques for, but no pictures are Arthur McKinnon, Mickey and Riley Simpkins, Louis Soroka, Cecil Lebell, Peter Ramsey, Bill Hall, and Bill and Jim Storm.

Anyone with any clues to where a photo might be found, can contact the Weegars at 532-6190.