

MONDAY, MAY 28, 2001

SECTION B

# In. memoriam

Capturing tributes to fallen dead

By Geoff Williams  
Post staff reporter

Memorial Day has a special significance for photography professor Jane Alden Stevens.

When a paid sabbatical came up at the University of Cincinnati a couple years ago, Ms. Stevens could have gone anywhere. She chose to travel through Western Europe, taking pictures of monuments and markers to the fallen dead of World War I.

Some of her work will be on display next month in a free exhibit at UC. She calls it, "Tears of Stone: World War I Remembered."

Ms. Stevens, 49, spent most of the 1970s living in Wurzburg, Germany, teaching English to German college students and acting as an art historical tour guide. She couldn't help but notice all of the monuments to World War I.

"They're just everywhere, in

the smallest villages and the largest towns," she said. "You just can't miss them."

So when her sabbatical arrived, Ms. Stevens, for a year and a half, in two-week periods, hopped through Europe, lugging a suitcase of camera equipment and a backpack of clothes, snapping 300 rolls of film and racking up phone minutes to call her husband, Gordon Barnhart, and her twins, now 5 years old, Connor and Zoe.

"What's been the aftermath of World War I for people?" wondered Ms. Stevens. "Do they really remember it? Do these monuments and markers have any meaning to anyone?"

As it turns out, yes.

"People are making pilgrimages all the time throughout the year, particularly from England, although from Germany and Italy," Ms.

Stevens said. "They leave trinkets

See **FALLEN** on 8B



## About the artist

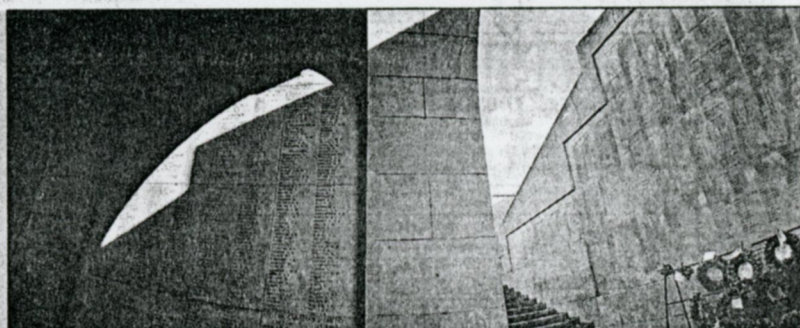
► **Name:** Jane Alden Stevens.

► **Age:** 49.

► **Grow up in:** Rochester, N.Y.; moved to Cincinnati in 1982.

► **Teaches:** Photography and Professional Practices for Fine Artists at the University of Cincinnati.

► **Show:** "Tears of Stone: World War I Remembered," June 9-30 at the University of Cincinnati's 840 Gallery, in Room 4340 of UC's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning. Information: (513) 556-2962.



**At the Menin Gate**, a British memorial to the missing in Belgium, a shaft of light casts a dagger-like image. At top, a soldier's picture from a grave in Belgium. Below, a statue of a fallen soldier with grenade at the Chateau-Thierry War Memorial in France.







Jane Stevens photographed two sculptures, representing a mother and father, as they stand at the head of Vadslo Cemetery in Belgium – for German soldiers. The creator of the sculptures, Kathe Kollwitz, lost her son, Peter, in World War I. He is buried at the cemetery.

## Fallen: Tear-stained photos

From 1B

behind, similar to the way people leave mementos behind at the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C."

Photographs, crosses, flowers, laminated resume-letters to the deceased – they were all found at the gravesites of long-ago warriors. One family had wrapped a picture of a young soldier in plastic, and then wired it to the cross, so it couldn't be taken away. The condensation that had collected in the plastic bag, next to the picture, looked like tears, Ms. Stevens said.

One of the things that struck Ms. Stevens the most was a message that a father had left behind, some 80 years ago, in 1919. His son apparently had returned to England from the war and died a year later. The father had the following words inscribed in the marker: "Sadly disfigured. 'Twas for the best."

Said Ms. Stevens: "All I could think was,

*"I believe that these pictures speak about the power of remembrance. And it's something that's universal about all of us."*

– Jane Stevens

'What horrible thing must have happened to his son, that his father would say, 'His death is for the best?'"

Everywhere Ms. Stevens went, she found signs that World War I isn't really over.

She visited the edges of pastures and forests surrounded by barbed wire with signs marked with a skull and crossbones and messages in three languages, reading, "Do not enter. Danger of death." That's because among the moss and bark and grass are land mines.

One memorial she found was for a town, and not its people. A marker would read, "Farm," where one used to lie. And then another marker would read, "Blacksmith."

The townspeople could never return because, Ms. Stevens said, "even though this land has been de-mined, the shells rendered the ground so toxic that it's going to take 200 years for the toxicity to seep out of the ground."

What lessons does Ms. Stevens hope visitors will take away, when they view her work?

"Even though the subject of my pictures is of World War I, it's not just about World War I. I believe that these pictures speak about the power of remembrance. And it's something that's universal about all of us. We all lose people, or our pets, or things that are important to us ... and I think these pictures really speak to the fact that the legacy of these memories lasts far longer than we might think."