

U.S. Army awards silver star to soldier

FORT LEAVENWORTH (AP) — A year after he was buried, the Army honored Sgt. Donald Walters with the Silver Star on Monday for the actions in Iraq that cost him his life.

Walters, 33, formerly of Kansas City, Mo., received the commendation posthumously during a ceremony at Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery, where he is buried. Walters was a member of the 507th Maintenance Company from Fort Bliss, Texas, that was ambushed in

southern Iraq on March 23, 2003.

Lt. Gen. William S. Wallace, who served in Iraq as the commanding general of the Army's V Corps, presented the Silver Star to Walters' widow, Stacie, and his mother, Arlene Walters, who has sought a better accounting of her son's death to reflect his actions.

In the ambush, which occurred just days after the start of the war, 11 soldiers were killed and six captured, including Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who was initially credited with put-

ting up a fierce fight during the battle. Lynch has said she did not fire a shot during the ambush. Lynch was later rescued from an Iraqi hospital.

"The exact events during the ambush in Nasariyah will never be completely known but to God and by those who perished in the struggle," Wallace said.

Walters, of Salem, Ore., had initially been awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. Autopsy reports indicate he died of gunshot

and two stab wounds to the abdomen.

Wallace said Walters displayed a courage that reflected his gallantry to serve his country and fellow soldiers caught in the ambush.

His mother and U.S. Rep. Darlene Hooley, D-Ore., have sought an Army investigation to correct earlier reports that credited Lynch with holding off Iraqi troops.

Walters, a veteran of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, is also survived by three daughters.

Beef company says it plans no more layoffs

WICHITA (AP) — Citing growing support from consumers for mad cow testing, Creekstone Farms Premium Beef said this week it was pursuing political and legal options in its fight to test every animal it slaughters for the disease.

"We do not plan to lay off any more people — and we intend to keep fighting to survive," said Bill Fielding, the company's chief operating officer.

Seasonally strong market demand for beef will help the company weather losses from the closure of Asian export markets, he said. The company had earlier laid off nearly 50 workers.

Japan has banned American beef since the first U.S. case of mad cow, formally known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy, was discovered last December.

Vice Agriculture Minister Mamoru Ishihara called the U.S. government's decision not to accept the company's offer "regrettable." Tokyo has said it hoped to discuss with Washington the possibility of blanket testing for mad cow initiated by the private sector.

The Agriculture Department denied last week a request from Creekstone to allow 100 percent BSE testing at its Arkansas City, Kan., plant — a move that would have allowed the company to resume export sales to Japan.

The Agriculture Department and the meat processing industry have contended the U.S. meat supply is safe, and 100 percent testing is a cost not justified by science.

Since the USDA decision, Fielding said his company has been inundated with e-mails from U.S.

consumers who say they would like a choice.

Among them is Steven Harris, an engineer in Narbeth, Pa., who told The Associated Press he stopped buying American beef mostly to protest of government food safety regulations. The only beef he has bought since December has been Australian beef he found at an alternative foods store.

"The USDA is supposed to protect the public from things," Harris said. "It is not supposed to come up with the least-cost way for the manufacturers."

Under an expanded surveillance program, the Agriculture Department plans to test for one year more than 220,000 older, high-risk cattle at a cost of \$70 million.

Creekstone, which is based in Campbellsburg, Ky., says its pro-

gram to test 300,000 head of cattle at its facility, at a cost of \$6 million or about about \$20 per animal, would cost taxpayers nothing since its customers have agreed to cover the cost.

"We still believe it is right," Fielding said. "We finished the lab, our people are trained, we continue to perfect our sampling procedures, and we think we will be able to eventually test. I think there will be enough public outcry and political outcry."

Just days before the Agriculture Department nixed Creekstone's testing plan, the company had been talking to Kansas State University about the possibility of the university putting a satellite lab at the plant.

"We had to be approved to do the test and they had to be approved," said George Kennedy, director of the Kansas State University's veterinary diagnostic lab. "So far neither one of us has been approved, so it is sort of a moot point."

In fact, it is unlikely even Kansas State University will get Agriculture Department certification as a BSE-testing lab under the government's expanded mad cow surveillance program.

Although Kansas State submitted a proposal, it was not chosen as one of the seven high-input approved laboratories in the country.

Spring storm contributes to fatal crash

SUBLETTE (AP) — Two people were killed Monday when their van skidded on a stretch of U.S. 160 slickened by a spring snowstorm, authorities said.

The Kansas Highway Patrol identified the victims as Maria Rodriguez, 41, of Ulysses, and Lyndon Syms, 39, of Garden City.

The accident happened around 7:50 a.m. about 10 miles west of

Sublette when the victim's van crossed the center line, striking a tractor-trailer.

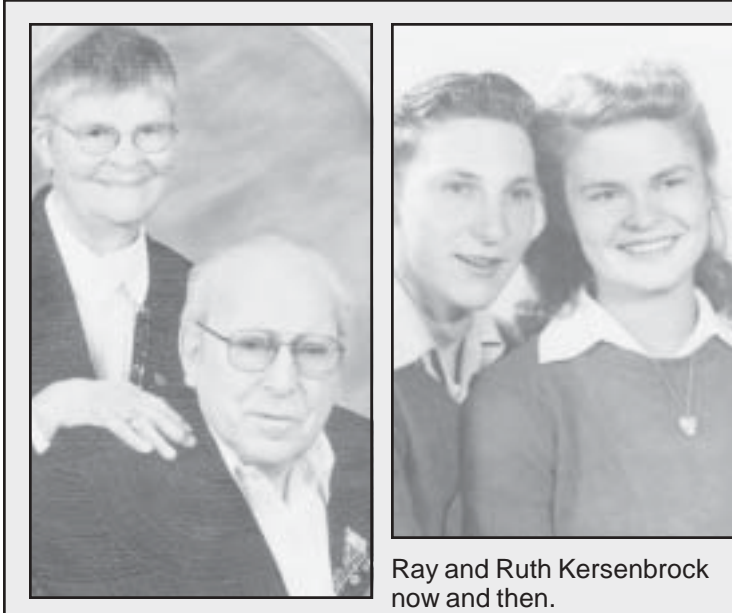
The rig overturned and came to rest on its top in the same ditch where the van stopped. Rodriguez and Syms were ejected.

A storm system from Canada moved into northwest Kansas just before midnight Sunday, dumping up to 3 inches of snow, said Scott

Reiter, a meteorologist in the Dodge City office of the National Weather Service. Snow also fell in parts of Colorado and Nebraska.

The snow fell quickly and accumulated briefly but soon melted because the ground was warm.

Reiter said snowfall in April isn't unusual. He said the snowfall average for Dodge City is 1 inch for the month.



Ray and Ruth Kersenbrock now and then.

Kersenbrocks to celebrate 60th wedding anniversary


Ray and Ruth Kersenbrock of Colby will be celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary on Friday, April 23. The couple was married at the home of A.C. "Broom" and Edith Kersenbrock, Ray's parents.


The bridesmaid at their wedding 60 years ago was Sylvia Hurst, Ruth's sister, and Glen Kersenbrock, Ray's brother.

Preacher Gunkel performed the wedding from her country church, said the couple's daughter, Linda, who now lives in Ketchum, Idaho. The Kersenbrock's grandson, Cory Kaveny of Phoenix, Ariz., and their daughter are requesting a card shower for the couple. Cards may be sent to: 455 Lawrence Dr., Colby, Kan. 67701.

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