

Welcome hunters!

Friday

November 11, 2005

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Volume 116, Number 178
Serving Thomas County since 1888

14 pages



COLBY FREE PRESS

Remembering the 11th hour Area veterans reflect on service years

Veterans Day is a way for Americans to honor its men and women who have served in the Armed forces. For Willie Engelhardt, it stands as a reminder of the victory over Japan and Hitler in World War II.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II.

Engelhardt, 90, of Mingo, was in five foreign countries during World War II, including England, France and Germany. He was also stationed in the state of New York.

He was in the U.S. Army four days short of five years.

Engelhardt said he was conscripted into the service during the second round of the draft in February 1945. He was only supposed to be in the service a year but that didn't happen.

"Pearl Harbor screwed all that up," Engelhardt said.

At the end of the war, there were rumors that Japan was going to be invaded.

"I heard that but I didn't believe it," he said.

At the beginning of the war, he was at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and in Germany



W. Engelhardt



H. Briery

when the Japanese surrendered. His first thought was they "should have known better than to take on a country like the United States and they couldn't 'lick' America."

After that, Engelhardt was glad to hear it was over, and happy to be getting out.

He said a point system was implemented to get soldiers sent home. Soldiers received three points for every month spent abroad and one for each spent stateside. Those with 130 to 140 points got out first. It took a little longer for him to get out because he had to accrue the necessary points.

To him, Veterans Day is a reminder of the



Harm Briery's got a Purple Heart after being wounded in the back and legs.

country's victory in World War II, and he said many people still don't understand its importance, and what it meant to the world.

"It's a wonderful day and I'm looking forward to it," Engelhardt said. "I'm proud

to be an American."

Hoxie resident Harm Briery, 81, spent three years of his life in the Army during World War II. He said his unit was against an invasion on Japan.

"We were 100 percent against it," Briery said, "but we knew we were going to have to go."

Briery entered the Army during the summer of 1943 when he was 19 years old. He trained as a machine gunner at Camp Roberts, Calif., and shipped out to Australia to join the 6th Infantry Division. He and his unit made four amphibian landings in New Guinea, on D-Day, Jan. 9, 1945.

Other landings included those at Lingayen Gulf on Luzon Island, as well as fighting south to Manila where they took Wall City.

Briery was wounded by artillery during a campaign in the Cordillera and was sent back to the United States in December 1945. He sustained permanent hearing loss in his left ear, was wounded in the back and legs and discharged in January 1946. He was awarded the Purple Heart.

Briery said he was glad when Japan surrendered. He dreaded the thought of having to invade the island, especially after an officer showed how Japanese women and children were trained to attack soldiers in the stomach using sharpened bamboo.

"I didn't like the idea of shooting a woman or child and was glad we didn't have to go there," he said.

Briery looks forward to Veterans Day and enjoys spending time with area veterans. Each year they try to get together for some type of celebration, this year's will be a gathering at the Hoxie Elk's tonight.

"Veteran's Day means us old vets can get together and lie to each other," Briery said.

"We know that veterans from World War II are dying at 20,000 a day and we won't be around much longer.

Briery said Sheridan County has about 30 World War II veterans most of whom are "in their 80s or older" and 12 of whom he expects to see today.

"Other than that, most of the guys are a mile north of town," Briery joked noting the location of the city's cemetery.

Auction, race time discussed

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Compromise was the name of the game at Thursday's Thomas County Fair Board meeting. Starting time of the 4-H livestock sale for the 2006 fair and the first night of fair racing were approved.

The 4-H sale will be at 5 p.m. and the races will start at 8 p.m., preceded by the beginning of hot laps at 7 p.m.

During his report, extension agent Joe Leibbrandt asked if any more thought was given to changing the sale time. This year, it was moved back to 4 p.m. to accommodate the beginning of hot laps at the races so the two wouldn't overlap.

Case Rundel, a member of the Abilene Hustlers 4-H Club, had asked earlier this summer on changing the sale time and also was at last night's meeting to make the same request.

He said they would like the sale time to be at 6 p.m. when it is cooler for livestock and give more people the opportunity to come to the auction.

Kerry Wark, who organizes the fair races, was at the meeting to discuss that contract as well as to talk about renewing his contract to run races at the fairgrounds during the race season.

Board member Nancy Rundel



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Thomas County Fair Board members (from left to right) Mark Anderson, Mark Bredemeier, Bill Shields and Gary Garrett listened to a report given by extension agents Doug Musick and Joe Leibbrandt (right and second from right) during Thursday's fair board meeting.

said the fair isn't so big that they have to have competing events, and said a compromise was an option.

"I think there has to be some middle ground there somewhere," she said.

Marty Crampton, board member, suggested moving the day of the auction. However, Wark said if it was moved to Thursday, it would run into the beginning of the demolition derby.

Board president Stan Strange asked Wark if he could back up the race time a half-hour. Wark said an

hour would be better. He added he didn't see any problems with reduced crowd numbers if the time was changed.

With that settled, the board turned to the subject of Wark's contracts. The board approved his contract to lease the fairgrounds, and his contract for two nights of fair racing. An agreement to hold a demolition derby in April was also approved.

Wark said he would like to see how well a derby in April would be accepted and didn't think it will interfere with the fair demolition

derby. He said it would probably draw a decent crowd, and thinks it might even increase the number of cars at the fair event.

Strange said it was worth doing for one year.

In other business, the board discussed bringing back youth events during the rodeo such as mutton busting or a greased pig contest. They are going to look into having mutton busting at next year's fair, and board member Gary Garrett was put in charge of it.

Board to debate on school choice

TOPEKA (AP) — The state board overseeing public schools began a debate Wednesday on creating additional competition against those schools, following the lead of an education commissioner who has been on the job a month.

Commissioner Bob Corkins spurred the discussion on school vouchers and increasing the number of special charter schools by briefing State Board of Education members on research on school choice issues, including a recent Harvard University study.

Last month, only a few days after the board hired him, Corkins told skeptical superintendents that public education was a "virtual monopoly" marked by "inherent inefficiencies" because it wasn't subject to competitive market forces.

Chairman Steve Abrams, an Arkansas City Republican, said the board needs to consider whether it will make proposals to the Legislature on school choice issues. Several of the 10 board members said they found Corkins' briefing helpful, though the board did not draft or endorse any measures.

"I'm not sure how I feel about this, so I need the information," said Kathy Martin, a Clay Center.

But four board members who opposed Corkins' hiring last month were upset over the discussion. Educators also have criticized Corkins' hiring, partly because he never has run a school or district and partly because he supports school choice initiatives. Board member Bill Wagon, a Topeka Democrat, said the board should focus on find-

Education Commissioner Bob Corkins will speak in Colby, at 5:30 p.m., Monday, at the Holiday Inn Express, 645 W. Willow on public school issues. Everyone is invited to attend.

ing the best practices in teaching students and running schools. He said the board should foster "community building" among educators and local leaders, not create a market with winners and losers.

"We don't need vouchers. We don't need more charter schools," Wagon said. "I'm not interested in characterizing the schools in this state as failing and needing radical solutions."

And board member Sue Gamble, a Shawnee Republican, said: "What's the problem we need to correct? We appear to be moving toward a solution to a problem, and I don't know what the problem is."

Corkins supports vouchers, which would allow parents to use public funds to send their children to private school.

But he has also said he sees "less intrusive" ways to spur competition, including adding more charter schools and providing tax credits for groups wanting to start schools.

Forty states, including Kansas, allow charter schools, which are independent of the local school board and free from the regulations of other public schools, giving them freedom in what they teach.

Choking game prompts attention by school administrators

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

An incident that nearly claimed the life of rural Colby teen prompted Colby Grade School Principal Terrel Harrison to take action.

"A parent gave me an article and I thought it was good information and thought parents need to be informed," Harrison said Thursday. Harrison sent home with fourth- and fifth-grade students a copy of an article outlining the game that is injuring and killing young people.

Oakley student Dustin Splattstoesser, 14, is recovering in a Denver hospital after almost being asphyxiated Oct. 24 playing a game

“All these games are dangerous . . .”

Dr. Darren Matchell

which restricted his airway to create a drug-like high. Splattstoesser is the son of Gary and Kay Splattstoesser.

Thursday, Chance Splattstoesser of Hoxie said the public needs to be educated about this growing crisis. He talked about his brother's progress.

"He's recognizing members of the family and friends, and was able to lift his legs today and was able to

stand briefly," Chance Splattstoesser said. "He was able to go outside in a wheelchair and has the tracheotomy out."

Harrison said she, like most of her teachers, didn't know much about the game being referred to as Pass—out, Tingling, Fainting, Space Monkey, Black Hole, Blackout, Knockout, Space Cowboy, Gasp, Rising Sun, Funky Chicken, Airplaning, Flatliner and Suffocation Roulette.

She decided to educate herself about them.

"I've told my educators to get with it and learn about it," Harrison said. "It's scary and we need to be educated and aware about what's out there."

Keying words such as choking or fainting game into an Internet search engine will make available information about deaths of youth and teens across the nation.

"We watch the children so closely, but I'm more concerned about what's happening outside of school," Harrison said. "As a parent, I'd want to know what's going on across the nation."

Harrison said students have not been gathered together in an assembly setting to talk about the game because she wants parents to educate their children about it.

"I believe this is something that needs to come from home," she said.

Dr. Darren Matchell of Colby agrees. Matchell said parents who think their children may be playing the game need to watch for signs of headaches, bloodshot eyes, marks on the neck, small red dots on the skin around the eyes and mouth and isolation behind closed doors.

He said teens, and preteens, often choose the non—drug form of creating an euphoria and if taken too far

can cause stroke, brain damage, heart attack, spastic paralysis or seizures.

"The game usually causes an euphoria when something is used that cuts off the blood supply to the brain. When the blood flow is restored it's like waking up from a dream," Matchell said.

Matchell said medical practitioners have learned young boys often use the games to lead to asphyxiophilia, which is a form of restriction of airway leading to sexual excitement.

"All these games are dangerous because they can cause loss of blood to the brain," Matchell said.

