



MAJ. MICHAEL TODD FISCUS'S casket (above) was placed in a hearse last Monday during a funeral service with military honors. In late February, Maj. Fiscus, his wife

Paula and daughters Alexandra and Gabrielle (below) went on a Disney cruise.

— Top photo by Deb Patterson, *The Mail-Journal*, Milford, Ind.

New boiler put on hold by council

City want to see if pool safe and ready for use

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
The Oberlin City council decided Thursday to wait on purchasing a boiler for the swimming pool to see if the east wall of the pool can be fixed, if the pool is safe and if the boiler can be used in a new pool.

The council received two bids for boilers at the meeting Thursday night, but decided to accept the low bid contingent on the pool being operable this year, assurance that the boiler can be used for a new pool and that the pool is safe and sound.

All members except Councilman Stan McEvoy voted yes on the motion.

The first bid was from Midwest Energy for \$16,412 and the second from Hansen Plumbing from North Platte for \$11,505.

The city budgeted \$20,000 in capital outlay for the pool for repairs and equipment with the idea in mind that a boiler could run around \$15,000. The old boiler died last summer.

Councilman Jay Anderson asked if the boiler could be used on a new pool. City Administrator Gary Shike said he thought so, but it depends on the life of the boiler and when a new pool can be built.

Maybe the city should take the \$15,000 and put it towards a new pool, Mr. Anderson said, and keep

the old one a little chilly for a year.

Mr. Shike said Drywall Roger Goltl from McCook is coming to look at the east wall under the diving boards to see how far the damage goes back.

What about installation and delivery on the boiler? asked Dr. Anderson. Mr. Shike said the city will do a lot of the work.

Mayor Ken Shobe recommended the council table the bids until they can find out if the wall can be repaired.

Before the pool is open, said Mr. McEvoy, he would like someone to say it is safe. Mr. Shike said he didn't want to delay things for too long, because summer will be here soon.

With \$20,000 budgeted for capital outlay, said Mayor Shobe, if the repairs are more than \$5,000, then people may have to get used to a cold pool.

Can the city accept a bid contingent on the pool being operable? asked Councilman Joe Stanley. That way, if a report comes back from Mr. Goltl that the wall can't be fixed, then the city won't be stuck with a boiler.

Mr. Stanley made a motion to accept the bid and included in it that the pool must be safe and sound. As far as safety goes, asked Mr. Shike, (See POOL on Page 10A)

Decatur grad first to die in combat

Mine kills Army officer near Kabul

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
Paula Fiscus said she remembers how it was the day the Army officer showed up at her door.

It was the day before Easter, and she was painting her girls' toenails.

It was around 11:30 a.m., she said, from her home in Milford, Ind. There was a knock at the door.

She said she saw a person in a uniform she didn't recognize, and thought it must be the Salvation Army.

When she opened the door, though, she saw it was a captain and his wife. Mrs. Fiscus said she screamed and told them to go away.

She knew why they were there. They stepped into the house and the wife stayed with the girls, Alexandra, 5 and Gabrielle, 4, while the captain gave her the news.

Mrs. Fiscus said she screamed and cried as the captain told her what happened to her husband of 10 years. Then came the hardest part, she said, sitting down to tell the girls that Daddy wasn't coming home.

Maj. Michael Todd Fiscus was killed Saturday, March 26, while on a scouting trip near Kabul, Afghanistan. The vehicle he was in struck a land mine, and all four soldiers inside were killed.



He became, apparently, the first Oberlin graduate to die in combat since overseas operations began in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

That was two weeks ago. Now the people have left and life is getting back to normal.

Mrs. Fiscus said the girls are used to their Daddy being gone,

because in his civilian life he was a charter pilot with Image Air in Warsaw.

Alexandra is taking it a little harder, because she understands it better. Gabrielle, she said, tries to console her Mommy. On Thursday, after everyone left, said Mrs. Fiscus, Gabrielle broke down. She didn't understand why other kids had a Daddy and she doesn't.

"One of the saddest things is that Todd loved to watch his kids grow," she said, "and now he won't be here physically to do that."

In Oberlin, Todd is remembered by classmates as a guy who liked to have fun. Kristin McHugh, who graduated with him in 1986, said they were in speech and National Honor Society together.

"Todd had a really fun personality," said Mrs. McHugh. "He was ready to laugh at any time and was a very intelligent person."

He may have come across as straight laced, she said, but there was a fun side to him.

Mrs. McHugh said after graduation, the two lost touch. He moved away and didn't make it back for reunions. The good thing about the 1986 class, she said, was that everyone was close, and when they do get together, it seems like old times.

She said as a military wife — her husband, Randy McHugh, just got back from service in Iraq with the National Guard — she feels terrible for his wife and understands the worry a woman has when a husband goes overseas. She said she brought her husband home the same day Maj. Fiscus was killed.

"It is hard to see someone on the other side," she said. "I feel very lucky."

With two kids, Paula Fiscus said, there isn't a lot of time to sit around and cry. One day, though, she was doing laundry and started (See HOUSE on Page 10A)

Council wants cheaper trucks

The Oberlin City Council decided to table the bids for two pickups for the city crew to see if they can find any through Jr's Used Cars for \$10,000 each, which is what they budgeted.

The council received three bids, one for \$11,000 for a 2001 Dodge Ram, one for \$10,800 for a 2001 Chevy and one for \$11,800 for a 2002 GMC from Jr's.

City Administrator Gary Shike said they received and opened the bids on Thursday, the day of the meeting. City Foreman Dan Castle said he hadn't had a chance to look at the trucks yet.

Mayor Ken Shobe said he thought Mr. Castle should look at the trucks before the council accepts the bids.

Councilman Stan McEvoy asked if owner Frank Black found any trucks that met the specifications the council asked for. Mr. Shike said there aren't any bids for under \$10,000.

Mr. Castle said smaller pick-ups of comparable years, which is what the city asked for, are more expensive than full-size trucks of the same age.

Mayor Shobe said they need to investigate the trucks or at least test drive them.

Councilman Ray Ward said he thought they needed to stick closer to the budget or go under it. He said at budget time, when the council decided to budget for trucks, they wanted the smaller ones which would use less gas. Now with higher prices, he said, smaller trucks would be better. Maybe the city needs to look for trucks that are a year older, he said.

Someone suggested that they look out of town for trucks. Mr. Shike said if the council wants the staff to look out of town, they will.

Mayor Shobe said he thought maybe they should broaden the area they are looking in and go to a 1999 model. Councilman Patrick Pomeroy said they could look on eBay. Trucks on eBay can't be test driven, said Mayor Shobe, but they could use the location finder on

Council Roundup

At a meeting Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Approved a 50-cents-an-hour raise for an employee who just passed his test to be a water system operator, even though the foreman recommended a \$1 an hour raise. Story on Page 3A.

- Decided to table bids for two pickups from Jr's Used Cars to find vehicles closer to what the city had asked for. Story to the left.

- Approved a sublease contract between Pheasants Forever and Jim Abbey for farm ground at Sappa Park. Story on Page 10A.

- Decided to wait to purchase a boiler for the swimming pool until someone comes to look at the east wall under the diving boards to see if it is safe and whether the new boiler can be used in a new pool. Story above.

eBay to look for the trucks.

The council wants to go out of town now? said Mr. Castle. That's a turnaround. He said he thought the city needs to support the local dealer. He has worked hard trying to find the trucks for the city and is doing the best he can.

Mr. McEvoy said he would like to see the city buy here. Maybe Jr's would negotiate some, he suggested.

Mr. Ward said he thought they needed to stay in the budget and if Mr. Black can find something that fits, that is great. Maybe, he said, the city should waive the bidding requirements and negotiate.

The prices are reasonable for the trucks, said Mr. Shike. Maybe the city should just ask him to find something for \$10,000.

The city decided to table the bids and look for something within the budget.

Businesses discuss painting canopies

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
The Oberlin Business Alliance discussed rejuvenating the canopies downtown with a scrape-and-paint job at their meeting last Wednesday.

Laurie Wasson, owner of Prairie Petals, said the canopies are getting rusty. She said she called painter Steve Stacy to get an estimate. From this numbers and some figuring on her part, she thought it would cost about \$51 a pole.

Mrs. Wasson said she thought the project would be something that business owners would have to buy

into. She said she isn't sure if the city would help.

The group talked about replacing the sidewalks, too, and how there are spots where they need to be lowered. Rusty Addleman, owner of Addleman Drug Store, had the sidewalk in front of the store replaced this spring.

Are there any grants to help with downtown beautification? asked Kurt Vollertsen, owner of Ward Drug Store. Yes, said Jack Benton; they just have to look for them.

Mr. Vollertsen said he didn't

think anything had been done to the canopies since they were put in.

Kimberly Davis, with *The Oberlin Herald*, suggested pictures and a story in the newspaper. She said maybe the group should ask for donations for the project since some of the people who live here, alumni or others who support the town, might want to help.

The group didn't make any decisions.

Mrs. Wasson said she could order flowers for the planters downtown again this year. The arrangements

normally cost around \$10 to \$12 for each planter. She said anyone interested in buying flowers for their planter should contact her. There are some planters in front of vacant businesses, she added, and anyone interested in maintaining one of those should call her at 475-3241.

Mr. Vollertsen said the group appreciates everyone who takes care of the planters.

Several members said they would be interested in purchasing flowers and taking care of other planters. (See PAINT on Page 10A)

* House quiet for family after friends, family leave for home

(Continued from Page 1A) to cry when she saw the Christmas decorations stored in the laundry room. She realized Todd wouldn't be here for another holiday.

Mrs. Fiscus said she and her husband met when they both worked at Bank One. He was going to college in Indianapolis and she was looking for a teaching job. She had just graduated and hadn't found one yet. The couple got married in 1994, and now she teaches middle school.

Todd's dad, James Fiscus, was in the military, she said, so the family moved around. Mrs. Fiscus said her husband's parents divorced and his mom, Sharon Smith, and Todd moved to Oberlin for his teen-age years. She worked at a veterinary clinic and he went to school.

Mrs. Smith, who now lives in Vincennes, Ind., said they moved to Oberlin before Todd started high school and he went all four years here.

While in school, he was in cross country, track, drama, Spanish Club, Student Council, science club, singers, the musical, homecoming escort and speech team.

Todd was gracious, polite and did what he believed was right, she said. He helped at the clinic, working cattle and helping with the large animal practice. He always found balance in his life with work, studying, school, friends, sports and singing.

His father was a career military man, said Mrs. Smith, and Todd considered a career in the military, but wanted to go to college first. He got a two-year degree in meteorology because he knew he wanted to be a pilot and thought that would help. He later earned a four-year degree in general studies, attending both the University of Kansas and Purdue University.

His wife said they planned to come to Oberlin for his 10th reunion, but it didn't work out. Instead, they sent a picture of the family. She said he kept in touch with several classmates.

Mrs. Fiscus said her husband started out in the Air Force and did



AT A CROSS COUNTRY meet in 1986, Todd Fiscus pushed himself to the finish line.

— Photo from the Red Devil Yearbook

weather forecasting during Operation Desert Storm to help pay for college. He transferred to the Army in 1992 or 1993 and went to Fort Benning, Ga. She said he graduated at the top of his class in officer candidate school and received the Jess Walls Distinguished Officer Candidate Award.

Maj. Fiscus was an officer with the Indiana National Guard and went to Bosnia for two years, serving with the 76th Brigade Headquarters Company out of Indianapolis. In June 2004, he was called up for service in Afghani-

stan. His job was to train members of the Afghan Army as part of the coalition joint Task Force Phoenix III, she said. He was the company commander.

Mrs. Smith said her son believed in his mission, in building the Afghan Army and their future democracy. He also believed in our freedom, she said.

While he was overseas, Todd kept in touch with his family through e-mail and Sunday morning phone calls.

Mrs. Smith recalled that when

Todd's father served in Vietnam, all they had was surface mail, which took a while to get to her. She said she was thankful for e-mail, which she used to talk with her son. He also called her once a month.

Mrs. Fiscus said that she doesn't plan on moving. The family home is on a small lake, she said, and Todd loved the place. He loved being there with the kids.

The town, she said, has been great for the family. The guys from Image Air have helped out a lot. It's all been overwhelming.

Todd loved to fish, jet ski, hunt and be outside in the morning when the sun came up. He also loved being out with the girls, she said.

Todd received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart and several other honors. His promotion to major came through after his death.

At the funeral, said Mrs. Smith, several people talked, including the governor of Indiana. There were people Todd served with and friends from his civilian life. The pastor who married Todd and Paula and christened both the girls had retired, but Mrs. Smith said, he came back to do the funeral.

"The pastor thanked God for loaning us Michael Todd Fiscus," she said, "and said now it was time to give him back. God loaned us a great man, and he served his family and country well. He was an honorable man."

At the end of February, said Mrs. Fiscus, Todd came home on leave and insisted that the family go on a short vacation. She said they went on a Disney cruise with the kids.

"For people who remember Todd they will remember his big smile," she said, "his hearty laugh and sense of adventure."

A memorial has been set up in Maj. Fiscus' name for the girls. Contributions can be sent to Mishler-Eastlund Funeral Homes, 461 W. 900 N. Milford, Ind., 46542.



AT HER DESK, Marian Dempewolf looked over the schedule at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Dietary manager retires after 17 years

After 17 years at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center, Marian Dempewolf is retiring as dietary manager.

Mrs. Dempewolf said she first applied for a dietary aide position, but the manager said there was a cook's position open and she took it.

When she was hired 17 years ago, she said, she never thought she would learn the different special diets. Mrs. Dempewolf said she gave herself three weeks to get it down. She did it, and her career took off from there.

Mrs. Dempewolf cooked for the first seven years at the center and then stepped up to the top job.

As the dietary manager, she is responsible for the monthly schedule for the workers, doing care plans for residents, running the dining rooms, making sure people get substitutes in their meals, making changes to the menu approved by the dietitians and making sure that residents' meal plans comply with the doctor's orders. Mrs. Dempewolf said she still

cooks when the schedule is tight or someone gets sick.

She also is responsible for purchasing the food, which is done once a week over the computer.

Mrs. Dempewolf, 67, said she decided to retire so that she can enjoy the things she wants to do while still in good health. Some of her priorities include family, yard work and gardening.

She has six children, Mike, Bob and his friend Rose Riffle, Doug and Chris, Greg, Patty and Dave Stapp, and Linda and Dave Schliep.

Mrs. Dempewolf said she has 10 grandkids and one more on the way. She said she wants to spend some time with them.

She is a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

Administrator Janice Shobe said everyone is invited to a reception being held by the center's Star Committee at 2:30 p.m. next Wednesday. There will be cake and punch.

Mrs. Dempewolf's last day will be Friday, April 22.

* Pool could be cool without a boiler

(Continued from Page 1A) what exactly is the council looking for? He said he didn't think he could find anyone to sign something to say that the pool is safe even if it was brand new.

If Mr. Goltl says the wall is going to fall in then, it isn't safe, but if he says the damage can be covered, then it is safe.

The council took a 15-minute recess to find the pool report they received from Water's Edge Aquatics.

Mayor Shobe said the report included several safety concerns, including slipping hazards, potential algae growth, the possibility of stubbed toes or cut feet and other details. If the council wants an opinion on the structure, he said, they need to get the engineer back to the

pool. Nothing has changed on the pool since the engineer looked at it last time, however.

It doesn't sound like from the engineer's report that he is concerned with the wall caving in, said Councilman Ray Ward.

The report says, said Mayor Shobe, that the engineer doesn't recommend staying in operation because of health and safety issues, but it isn't a structural issue.

Maybe the city needs to deal with some of the safety issues before opening, said Mr. Ward.

Maybe the structural issue should come out of the motion or the motion should be amended, Mayor Shobe said. No, said Mr. Stanley. He said he wanted to keep it in the motion until Mr. Goltl looks at it.

Paint topic of meeting

(Continued from Page 1A)

In other business, the alliance:

- Decided to not hold the Pot of Gold contest next year after they received only one entry this year, from Peg Smith, who won the gifts. The group agreed the giveaway had run its course. Members said maybe they could put the extra effort into the basketball contest next year.

- Heard that Elmer Zdrov won that contest this year by picking the winner of the basketball play-offs.

- Discussed having Red Devil windsocks or flags for businesses downtown. Mrs. Wasson said they talked about the idea a couple years ago and wanted to know if it was something the alliance members would be interested in.

- Agreed they would have a sale on Friday for income tax day.

- Agreed that Kem Bryan can paint the windows downtown again this year for Memorial Day and the car show.

Council approves farm lease at park

The Oberlin City Council approved a sublease contract Thursday between Pheasants Forever and Jim Abbey for farm ground at Sappa Park.

The sublease gives Mr. Abbey, who farmed the land for the city for many years, the right to farm it for the next three years.

In the past, though, Mr. Abbey has farmed the land on shares, giving the city a third of the crop and also running cattle at the park. The council decided to end that arrangements and seek new proposals. Under the sublease, the conservation group will plan and direct planting to encourage wildlife and recreation.

Councilman Jay Anderson said he was concerned about the city get-

ting a part of the payment if any of the ground goes into the federal Conservation Reserve Program. City Attorney Steve Hirsch said the contract between the city and Pheasants Forever is written so the city decides where the payment will go. The contract says that the city has to approve entry into the Conservation Reserve Program, which requires a 10-year commitment.

The council approved the sublease with Dr. Anderson abstaining from the vote.

City Administrator Gary Shike said he had signed the contract for employee health insurance with Blue Cross/Blue Shield recently. The premiums went down 1.6 percent this year, he said.

A new transformer for the power plant will not be in by this summer, said Foreman Dan Castle. He said it is being built in June and will be installed in early fall. The council planned on it being in this summer, in time for peak usage. Mr. Castle said since it will be built, if there is an emergency, it can be installed over the summer.

Mr. Castle said he thought the tree trimming along city power lines is around 75 percent done. So far, it is working out well, he said, and there haven't been as many down limbs or power outages during the spring storms.

In other business, the council:

- Heard that Mr. Castle has equipment information together for the

council members, including facts and figures of what the city owns, but he needs to get it typed up.

- Heard it will take longer getting a sign in at The Gateway than expected.

- Heard that the Convention and Visitor's Bureau and Mr. Shike sent a letter to the state to ask for use of the sign at the entrance of Sappa Park to help promote the Last Indian Raid Monument at the cemetery and to tell people where the park is.

- Heard that the water main extension north of town along U.S. 83 is mostly done. It still needs to be pressure tested, but the line is buried.

- Appointed Mr. Shike and Councilman Ray Ward as delegates to the Municipal Energy Association.

Food pyramid doesn't include alcohol use

By TRANDA WATTS

The traditional food guide pyramid does not have any clear reference to food safety and very little reference to alcohol use or the calories that alcohol adds.

In the new system, we will see more information on these topics.

Alcoholic Beverages

Those who drink alcoholic beverages, the guidelines say, should do so sensibly and in moderation—up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men.

Some should avoid drinking, including those who cannot restrict

their alcohol intake, women who may become pregnant, pregnant and lactating women, children, people taking medications that can interact with alcohol, and those with certain medical conditions.

Alcoholic beverages should be avoided by anyone engaging in activities that require attention, skill or coordination, such as driving or operating machinery.

Food Safety

To avoid microbial food-borne illness, the guidelines advise:

- Clean hands, food contact surfaces, and fruits and vegetables.

Meat and poultry should not be washed or rinsed because of the danger of cross-contamination.

- Separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing or storing foods.

- Cook foods to a safe temperature to kill microorganisms.

- Chill perishable food promptly and defrost foods properly.

- Avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk

or any products made from unpasteurized milk, raw or partially cooked eggs or foods containing raw eggs, raw or undercooked meat, unpasteurized juices and raw sprouts.

Tranda Watts is Kansas State University extension specialist in food, nutrition, health and safety for Decatur, Gove, Norton, Sheridan, and Trego counties.

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That's why it's essential to immunize your child with the proper vaccinations by 24 months of age. You'll lower or eliminate the risk of many preventable diseases and illnesses. It's the best way to protect your future, and the future of the new life with which you've been given.

Contact your provider today and find out if they participate in the "Immunize and Win a Prize" vaccination program. Keeping your child's immunizations up to date is a gift you'll both be grateful for.

This message brought to you by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and its partners. For more information, visit KDE at <http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/immunize>

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