



OBERLIN GRADUATE Cassidy Shields hugged her grandmother, Shirley Shields, and prepared to give her a rose during Commencement exercises on Saturday. — Herald photo by Sarah Fredrickson

Family mourns loss of husband and father

By **STEVE HAYNES**
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An Army reservist who had lived in Oakley, and whose parents still live in the area, died Friday in Kandahar, Afghanistan, after apparently drowning while crossing a body of water during combat operations, the Defense Department said.

Sgt. 1st Class Trenton L. Rhea, 33, was a member of the 603rd Military Police Company, an Army Reserve unit based in Belton, Mo., south of Kansas City in Cass County.

Jeff Wingo, a public affairs officer at Fort Leavenworth, said Sergeant Rhea leaves his wife, Leah Reid Rhea, and three daughters, Autumn, 12; Joanna, 5; and Abigail, 3. The family lives in Kansas City, Mo., north of the Missouri River and attends the First Baptist Church in nearby Platte City.



SGT. 1ST CLASS TRENTON RHEA lived with his wife, Leah, and daughters, Autumn, 12; Joanna, 5; and Abigail, 3, in Kansas City, Mo., and worked a civilian job at Fort Leavenworth when not on active duty.

The Army said his father, Marshall Rhea, is a farmer near Oakley, and his mother, Rebecca Rhea, lives in Colby.

"He was a very, very awesome person who cared a lot about people," his mother said Monday. "He had a very strong faith and was very honored to serve his country.

"We are so proud of him, and we will miss him very much, but I know he is in a better place now."

She said Trent attended grade school and high school in Oakley. After graduation, he attended Colby Community College for a while before moving to Missouri. He met his wife while going to college in Warrensburg, Mo.

"He got straight A's all the way through school," she said. "He got one B — I don't remember what class it was — but it was devastating to him.

"We all knew it was possible when he went over there," Rhea said of her son's death, "but I still can't

believe he's gone.

"I'm so proud of him. I'm proud of everyone who does that."

Mr. Wingo said Sergeant Rhea was in his third tour overseas, with previous assignments at the U.S. Naval Station in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and in Iraq, plus stateside active duty at Fort Riley.

As a military policeman in Afghanistan, his mission was to train the Afghan Police Force, which he considered vital to the Afghan people. He had earned military honors including a Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal and Army Achievement Medal. His civilian job was with the Human Terrain System at Fort Leavenworth, just across the Missouri River from the Platte City area.

He was described as a great leader, one who led by example and considered his soldiers as family.

Officials in Washington and To-

peka expressed sorrow on hearing of the death.

"America will forever be indebted to Sergeant Rhea for his service and sacrifice," said U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kansas). "My deepest sympathies go out to his family, and I ask all Kansans to join me in keeping his family and friends in their thoughts and prayers during this difficult time."

"On behalf of the citizens of Kansas, Lt. Governor Colyer and I offer our condolences to Sgt. 1st Class Rhea's family and friends for their loss," said Gov. Sam Brownback. "Sgt. 1st Class Rhea will always be remembered for his service by the American people."

Funeral services will be in Sedalia and burial will be in LaMonte, Mo., the Army said, but no date had been set. Mr. Wingo said the family asked that the news media respect the family's privacy and not cover his arrival, funeral or burial.

*Seniors say final goodbyes

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music by the woodwind ensemble, "Children's Suite, Opus 27," and the high school choir, "Our Journey Continues."

The seniors handed out roses to their parents and others who have helped them along the way, while "Say Goodbye" by Skillet was played.

Mika Hackney presented a senior slide show.

High School Principal Ben Jimenez and school board members Doug Brown, Jerry Chambers, Dan Grafel, Abby Hisson, Dan Nedland and Dan Wasson presented diplomas to the graduates. Superintendent Duane Dorshorst transferred the graduates tassels after each presentation.

The DCHS Singers did "Letting Go," and the class song, "Home" by Phillips Phillips, was played as a recessional.

Graduating seniors were Kade Aaron Brown, Tyler Joseph Bruggeman, Cassandra Michelle Canto, John Wesley Carlisle, Dakota Grant Cook, Mikaela Jean Dorshorst, Ashley Marie Farr, Keatra Jean Fisher, Channing Lane Fortin, Meghan Anne Gault, Matthew Benjamin Glading, Mika Jenae Hackney, Matthew James Helm, Taylor Nichole Macfee, Zachary Nathaniel Thomas Macki, Kaylee Robyn May, Ryan Henry May, Zachary Benjamin May, Samantha Jo Meitl, Elizabeth Margaret May Nedland, Dannay Briana Rhein, Jonathon T. Rorick, Darbi Kit Rouse, Cassidy Marie Shields, Cheyanne Elizabeth Soderlund, Adrian Jordan Stoll and Cody Mitchell Wurm.

Members of the National Honor Society include Brown, Bruggeman, Dorshorst, Glading, Helm, R. May, Z. May, Nedland, Rouse, Shields and Soderlund.

Red, silver and white are the class colors; iris, the flower; and "Success is not to be measured by the position one has reached in life, rather by the obstacles overcome while trying to succeed," a quote from Booker T. Washington, the motto.

Bruggeman was the class president, Nedland the vice president, Helm the secretary and Fisher the treasurer.

*Services set in several towns

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a.m. on Sunday.

Lunch will be served from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the multipurpose room of the former Norcatour Grade School, followed by the parade from The Bank to the cemetery at 1:30 p.m. The parade will be led by the American Legion Riders from Norton.

At 2 p.m., the parade will enter the cemetery, where services will be held. Maj. Dallas McMullen will deliver the keynote speech and Pastor Chris Nelson will play "Taps."

Following the service, everyone is invited to the Methodist Educational Building for refreshments. In case of inclement weather, the services will be held in the former Norcatour High School gym.

*Stores close for a day

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catour will serve lunch from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Sunday in the lunchroom at the former Norcatour Grade School, but will be closed Monday.

The Eagle Convenience Store will be open all day and night and CrossRoads Express will be open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Dollar General will maintain regular hours of 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Oberlin Livestock Auction will not have a sale on Memorial Day.

The next auction will be Monday, June 3.

The Decatur County landfill will be closed. There will be no trash pickup. Monday trash routes will be picked up a day later.

The *Oberlin Herald* will be closed Memorial Day. The paper will be put together Tuesday, one day later than normal. Copies will be available on newstands Wednesday afternoon and delivered in the mail most places on Thursday.

- JENNINGS**
A Memorial Day service begins at 10 a.m. on Monday at the Jennings Cemetery. The Jennings American Legion will be in charge.
- LEOVILLE, SELDEN**
Memorial services by the Selden American Legion Post and Auxiliary will be at 9:30 a.m. Monday at Mount Calvary Cemetery at Leoville, followed by services at 10:30 a.m. at the Selden Cemetery.
- The Girl Scouts will lead the flag salute and the invocation will be given by Bernita Aumiller, auxiliary chaplain. Brandon Irwin will provide music.

Dennis Rogers will speak. Don Juenemann will place a wreath. The Legion will be in charge of a rifle salute, after which "Taps" will be played by Morgan Ritter and Nicholas Brown.

HERNDON
Memorial Day services will begin at 2 p.m. Monday at the Herndon Veterans of Foreign Wars Post, said Commander Chris Niermeier. The Herndon Veterans of Foreign Wars and Oberlin American Legion will conduct the service. They will also be taking names for veterans interested in going on a Kansas Honor Flight.

*County to hold a special meeting

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"The devils in the details," said County Appraiser Allen Hale, "and you're always going to be danged if you do and danged if you don't. There will always be people all for it and all against it."

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., said that she had spoken with the Oberlin School Board and gotten members' support for the program, adding to the list of taxing entities in support that includes the City of Oberlin and the commissioners themselves. The main priority now, she said, is to get the paperwork moving so that investors in a new motel being planned for near The Gateway could start putting their ducks in a row.

Scott Sproul, Norton County economic development director, said that he has been working with the program for two years. It started with a cap of \$250,000, he said, meaning that you could get a prop-

erty tax rebate for any property valued up to that amount. But when housing developers and a chain hotel came in, the county ended up removing the cap to encourage the developments. "Housing pushes most of the conversation," he said, "and spurs the competitiveness with other county's neighbor revitalization programs."

"I talked to four different housing developers who were looking at doing something (in the region), and the first thing they asked is if we had this program. Then the second thing they asked was what the thresholds we had were. That's the main reason we went to having no cap on it. I know it leaves it open ended, but we were able to attract a developer that's building 12 duplexes.... We had a local investor that put six houses in that were modular homes.

"This is also available for existing businesses. We've had several that have taken advantage with refurb-

ishment and expansion."

Norton has the program set up so that 100 percent of a property owner's tax on any increase in valuation will be rebated its first year, he said, and then the rebate will decrease at 10 percent a year until the tax paid is back up to 100 percent at the end of 10 years. That gives a start-up business a financial cushion to work with during its most critical beginning years, Mr. Sproul said.

The program requires that those enrolled have a starting investment of at least \$10,000, he said, and that they keep up on all of their taxes. If you become delinquent on any other property, he said, you're kicked out of the benefit program altogether.

"Well I'm in favor of it," said Commissioner Brad Marcuson. "We need to do something to spur the economy around here and make the place look a little better."

"I can tell you one thing," said Mr. Sproul. "We wouldn't have gotten those duplexes without it."

*Alumni to get pictures

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clude coffee and snacks in a newly-expanded parlor, a slide show of honored classes, a free tour of the 15 historical museum buildings, a look through yearbooks and more.

On Friday, the Oberlin Busness Alliance will be grilling hamburgers and polish sausages in front of the museum from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for a donation, with proceeds going for new downtown banners.

The Oberlin Pool Committee is sponsoring a dance from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. to welcome back the alumni, friends and families at the Oberlin American Legion Hall. Deejay Jonathan Fick will provide the music. Admittance will be by donation.

A schedule of class reunions is listed below, with times given for 10-year and 25-year anniversary class pictures for *The Herald* in bold. All five-year reunions are also listed. Those classes wishing to have pictures taken should call photographer Amanda Sowers at (785) 470-7979.

Stan and Tamara McEvoy home, 310 E. Ash, food provided. **Pictures at 1 p.m.**

Class of 1993: Kerry Louderback home, South U.S. 83, noon to 3 p.m. **Pictures, 2:30 p.m.**

Class of 1998: Oberlin American Legion Hall, 4 p.m.

Class of 2003: Family-style barbecue, 6 p.m., Friday, rural Herndon home of Clay and Jennie (Swart) Anderson. Saturday, 10:30 a.m. at the Oberlin Country Club for golf; lunch at noon, bring side dish, children welcome. **Pictures at 4 p.m.**

Class of 2008: Noon luncheon at the home of Brad and Elaine Marcuson.

JENNINGS ALUMNI
The Jennings High School Alumni Banquet will be held Saturday at

the Jennings Senior Center. Registration begins at 6 p.m., with the banquet to be served at 6:30 p.m. by Leanna Sloan of Hoxie.

Officers include the Class of 1959: Judy Tacha Vaughn, George Jones, Geraldine Fleckenstein Lampe and Roberta Mizell McAllister. The Jennings Czech Museum will be open from 2 to 5 p.m. and also following the banquet.

HERNDON ALUMNI
The Herndon Alumni Potluck Banquet will begin at 6 p.m. Saturday, at St. Mary's Hall in Herndon. The 1963 graduating class, celebrating 50 years, will be at the Herndon Senior Center in the afternoon and friends of the class are invited to stop by.

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