



PEKIN DAILY TIMES

PEKIN

Thousands honor Basteau



Flag bearers line the entrance to Preston-Hanley Funeral Homes & Crematory for Lance Cpl. Jordan S. Basteau's visitation Tuesday. SKYLAR EDWARDS / TIMES STAFF

Family, friends and strangers pay their respects

By Michael Smothers
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Homes & Crematory.

There the family of Jordan Basteau gathered to accept the words of condolence and messages of pride that hundreds of people brought for more than three hours.

Not all knew Basteau, 19, or his family, but they knew what the young man had done for them and his country in his short life.

"Way too young," an older woman said as she studied

a table of photographs from the Pekin native's childhood and one of the last taken, that of Basteau smiling proudly in the uniform of a U.S. Marine Corps lance corporal.

Basteau was killed Oct. 23 during combat in Afghanistan, becoming the first Pekin resident to die in the line of duty in the decade of American military activities in that country and Iraq.

The Pekin Community High School graduate of 2010, who immediately enrolled in the Marines to fulfill his confirmed ambition, last visited home in

September before his deployment.

His body returned home Monday in a procession along Illinois Route 29 that was lined with three miles of flags provided by Larry Eckhart of Little York, known as The Flag Man for providing that service at military funerals throughout Illinois.

As Steve Basteau, Jordan's father, recalled seeing them during Tuesday's visitation, his voice choked.

"The pride I had yesterday when we drove into the city ... It was phenomenal. I can't express it," he said.

See BASTEAN, A7

FIRST in PRINT

PEKIN

Ex-mayor dies at 83

By Sharon Woods Harris
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Former Pekin Mayor Willard Ernest Birkmeier will be remembered for his love of family and the community he served for more than 20 years.

"Phyllis and Willard loved each other — they were soul mates," said Beverly Grimes, a neighbor of 35 years. "Willard loved people. The word love is always associated with Willard. He loved family, and that was what was most important to him."

Birkmeier, Pekin commissioner from 1967 to 1979 and then mayor from 1979 to 1983, died at 7 a.m. Tuesday at Pekin Manor, where he had been living due to a lengthy illness.

In the community, Birkmeier was always one to say yes when asked to volunteer to serve on a board or whatever else needed to be done.

"He believed Pekin was a good community and he wanted Pekin to do well," said Grimes. "Pekin was looked up to by other communities."

"Willard was a lifelong Democrat. I'm a Republican. We did have a few discussions about that. He was very involved in his political party and the community."

Grimes said Birkmeier loved his children — Mike, Jan and Chris — dearly. An unfortunate firearms accident claimed the life of Chris when he was only 15 years old.

"That spoke volumes to me about what kind of man Willard was," said Grimes. "When their son passed, they called all of the boys who were there when the accident happened and told them they wanted to be a part of their lives and for them to grow up and have good lives. He had a lot of integrity and a lot of kindness."

Rose Hasler served as Birkmeier's executive secretary during his term as mayor. She remembers Birkmeier as a very gentle man, always concerned for others. He had a few characteristics that always amazed her.

See BIRKMEIER, A7

EDITOR'S PICK

THURSDAY

HGE to meet

East Peoria Home & Community Education will meet at 10:45 a.m. Thursday at the Fondulac Administration Building on Veterans Parkway in East Peoria. The program will be "Genealogy — Where and How to Begin," by Doris Doughty. A Thanksgiving lunch will be served. Guests may attend. For more information or to become a member, call 699-7336.

INSIDE TODAY



Cellini convicted

William Cellini, a multimillionaire who wielded behind-the-scenes influence with Illinois politicians for decades, was convicted Tuesday of conspiring to shake down the Oscar-winning producer of "Million Dollar Baby," one of the last chapters of the legal saga tied to disgraced former Gov. Rod Blagojevich. Details, A3

COMING TOMORROW



Dead battery

Columnist Dave Simpson says rather than jump-starting the economy, we actually need a new battery. See Thursday's Opinion page.

TODAY'S WEATHER

65/35

Mostly cloudy. Highs in the mid 60s. Southwest winds 10 to 15 mph. Tonight, occasional showers. Lows in the upper 30s. North winds 15 to 20 mph. Chance of precipitation 90 percent. Forecast, A3

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EAST PEORIA

Summit Drive extension opens

By Ken Harris
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years or so.

Former Washington Alderman Mahlon Blumenshine was one of the first to come up with the idea of extending Summit Drive north to Centennial Drive, where it would meet up with Grange Road and create a north-south corridor connecting U.S. Highway 24 and Route 8. The total distance of the extension would be less than a mile.

According to John Ackerman, that was in the late '70s.

And when Ackerman began his term as a Washington alderman in 1999, Blumenshine filled him in on his aged vision that had come close on more than one occasion to getting done but had always fallen apart.

"Mahlon gave me the challenge to get it done after he could never seem

to get it done," Ackerman said. "It's a golden opportunity for Sunnyland to really boom, and this opens the front door for them."

Blumenshine himself suffers from a faulty memory now and said he does not remember when he began pushing for the project, but he said he remembers advocating for it for several years.

See SUMMIT, A7

PEKIN

Bead fundraiser finds its mark

By Valari Hyatt
Times correspondent

Dr. Michele Moul hosted her first BeadforLife party on Oct. 29, 2010. One year later to the date, she surpassed her \$20,000 goal.

"As of this moment we have sold \$21,935 worth of beads," she told the Pekin Daily Times. "Thank you, Pekin. We did it!"

What started as a fun Christmas service project

evolved into an all-year service project to raise \$20,000 in one year. The money goes to help lift Ugandan women out of poverty and become self-reliant through education and entrepreneurial development.

Ugandan women turn colorful recycled paper into beaded jewelry, which is eventually sold at BeadforLife parties around the world.

Moul said she is indebted to those women in Pekin who purchased hundreds, if not thousands, of beads at her parties.

"It's because of them that we're able to help raise this kind of money to help Ugandan women rise out of poverty," she said. "I want to thank everyone who bought a necklace, bracelet or earrings. It all adds up. Thanks, Pekin."



Jan Greenway, Terri Gambetti and Diane Larimore look over beaded necklaces during Dr. Michele Moul's BeadforLife open house at her office on El Camino Drive Oct. 26. JONI ANDREWS / TIMES STAFF

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