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Email:

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Wednesday, August 24, 2005

Hoopeston's only locally-owned daily news publication

P.O. Box 441, Hoopeston, IL. 60942

www.justthefacts.net

McDonald's is site of soldiers' reunion after 51 years apart

Frank Aguirre of Lafayette, Ind., was as nervous as a schoolgirl Tuesday. He was about to meet an Army buddy for the first time in 51 years.

Aguirre, who moved to Lafayette a few months ago after living in California, and Fort, of Morton, served in the Korean War. They agreed to meet at the Hoopeston McDonald's at 11 a.m.

Aguirre arrived more than an hour early, bringing to the restaurant a box of pictures of his team. "Where is Charlie," he wondered at 10:55. And again at 11:05 and 11:15. At 11:20, his cell phone rang. Fort was calling from the former Shell gas station to find his compatriot. Within minutes, the two were embracing.

"You've gotten fat,"

Fort said to Aguirre as he hugged his old friend.

As the men looked at pictures of the 1954 Yokosuka (Japan) Seahawks football team, both walked down memory lane. "I blocked him one time and damn near killed him," Fort said, pointing at a figure in one of the framed photographs.

"We had a great team," Aguirre said. And a winning one. The Seahawks were largely undefeated but Aguirre remembered one loss, to the Air Force All Stars during the Rice Bowl in Tokyo.

The meeting was Aguirre's idea. The former



Frank Aguirre, left, and Charles Fort look over football pictures from their days serving in the Army in Japan. The two met at McDonald's Tuesday morning after not having seen each other for 51 years.

longshoreman has been "looking for some of my teammates for the last 30 or 40 years. I kept looking for guys, little by little. I wondered 'where would they be? I just want to see what they're doing.'"

Aguirre's search has taken him across the United States, either in person or by phone, with trips to Memphis, Tenn., Kansas City, and Arkansas. While many former teammates live in the same general area as they did while in service, most have moved out of the small towns they called home. Others have died.

See REUNION on other side

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Milford woman among first to receive Mervis Family Endowed Scholarships at DACC

DANVILLE—Officials at Danville Area Community College Foundation are proud to announce the first recipients of the Mervis Family Endowed Scholarships. The Mervis Family Endowed Scholarships are made possible through the generosity of the Mervis Family Foundation, Mervis Industries, and Mr. and Mrs. Lou Mervis.

In its inaugural year, the fund awarded four scholarships for \$1,000 each. Scholarships were given to Natasha Burgett of Milford, who plans to pursue a career in social work/counseling; Paige McConnell of Catlin, who will major in elementary education; and two Danville residents, Caleb Melton, whose interest lies in meteorology, and Kathy Wright, a non-traditional student returning to school to pursue a degree in education.

Community organization sets ‘Invest in Rossville’ meeting

The Rossville Community Organization (RCO) will be holding an open meeting to discuss “Invest In Rossville” a proposed corporation designed to stimulate community redevelopment.

The meeting will be held on Thursday, August 25 at the Rossville High School gym starting at 7 p.m. Anyone with an interest or connection to Rossville is encouraged to attend.

“Invest in Rossville” is an idea which has grown out

Reunion continued from other side

Aguirre moved to Lafayette to study kinesiology at Purdue University. The 71-year-old said has a Master’s degree in psychology from Mexico and a PhD in military science, neither of which are accepted in the U.S. “I’m starting here and going again,” Aguirre said, adding he tells friends he decided to return to school “because I don’t play golf.”

Football brought the men together initially and was a constant in their lives. Aguirre played semi-pro ball and tried out for the Redskins but didn’t make the cut. He will be inducted into the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame later this year for his work on the field and on the sidelines coaching others.

Fort, who attended the University of Illinois and participated in their football program, now plays armchair quarterback, saying the current U of I team “is

The recipients were chosen for demonstrated leadership in community service activities. Burgett was active in a peer mediator group that allowed her to help fellow students and a science club that introduced younger children to the fun side of science. Melton turned his love of hockey into a volunteer opportunity by assisting the Danville Wings with public relations and pyrotechnics. He has also assisted the Eastern Illinois University hockey team with promotions and public relations. Wright, a day care provider, volunteers at local school events, takes her young charges to fun runs at the park, and is active in her church. McConnell began volunteering at the local library when she was 10 years old and has been the music librarian at her school for three years. Before graduating she trained a younger

of a series of “Visions” Meetings sponsored by the RCO’s Executive Committee. Based in part on a similar project down by the citizens of Bonaparte, Iowa, it is designed to form a for profit corporation to reinvest in the community to help stimulate the commercial district utilizing existing buildings not already occupied by businesses and helping to develop a retail mix that will be appealing to visitors and locals alike.

A brief presentation on what RCO has been working on and a background on the Visions meetings will be part of the agenda. Following an overview of the “Invest in Rossville” concept, a question and answer period will take place.

For those interested, the Rossville-Alvin School District will conduct a brief tour of the high school building to show its changes to a vocational education facility. The tour will start at 6:30.

For more information on invest in Rossville, visit the RCO web page at <http://rossvilleshops.com/rco/index.html> or call 217-748-6290.

Weather

Mostly sunny today and tomorrow. High today 80, low 56. Tomorrow’s high 82, low 61.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopes-ton Weather Service, (217) 283-6221.

student to take her place.

Police News

A 68-year-old man reported Monday that someone took a CD player, several CDs and an unknown amount of money from his vehicle parked in the 600 block of South First Ave.

A 20” black and gold pearl Redline bike was taken Monday from the 500 block of West Elm. The bike is valued at \$200.

A 16” Next bike with green, white, black and gray stripes was taken Monday from the 700 block of East McCracken.

A 20-year-old Hoopeston man reported Monday that his windshield was cracked while parked in the Pami-da parking lot, 1020 W. Chestnut.

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