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**Testimony on AB 52 Presented to
Assembly Committee on Education
March 3, 2003
By Dr. Steve Mulvenon
Communications Director
Washoe County School District**

Good afternoon, Chairman Williams and members of the committee. For the record, I am Steve Mulvenon, Director of Communications for the Washoe County School District and I am speaking on behalf of the district.

I am here to lend our wholehearted and unqualified support to AB 52. This legislation recognizes and honors the sacrifices which hundreds, if not thousands, of Nevada young people made in defense of their country during World War II. They heard their nation's call and responded, leaving high school behind. Many did not return. Many of those who did were interested in getting a job, getting back on their feet and getting back to normal. High school was behind them. They saw themselves as either too old or perhaps too worldly to return to the classroom, so they went through life without a high school diploma. Filling that void now, even though it's more than 50 years late, is the right thing to do. It would be one way for this state to say "thank you for your service to our country." In doing so, Nevada would join at least 24 other states who have joined "Operation Recognition" started in Massachusetts in 1999.

The Washoe County School District would be proud to work along side of the Nevada Office of Veterans' Services to locate these veterans and organize the appropriate ceremonies in the North. In fact, if our neighboring school districts were interested, we'd be pleased to coordinate a joint ceremony for multiple districts in Reno.

On a personal note, allow me to tell you the story of one such veteran; Karl Berndt of Kansas. "Karl Berndt left the halls of Hoxie High School just before the end of his junior year in 1942. He was the first Hoxie student drafted to serve in World II. While his classmates learned algebra, English and science, Berndt worked in the U.S. Army's 27th General Hospital Unit in New Guinea and the Philippines. After his military service was completed in January 1946 Berndt returned to Kansas where became an aircraft welder, then a mechanic. He never did finish high school, but the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance" played Saturday for him and 13 other Hoxie students drafted into service. All were given the diplomas they would have earned if the war had not called them away." (Hays Daily News)

Karl Berndt is my father in-law and I'm sad that my work kept me from attending that ceremony 2 years ago. My wife and daughter attended, and when I asked my daughter what she remembered about that day, she said, "I remember crying. It was really nice to see grandpa up there on that stage. I was proud for him."

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION

DATE: 3/3/03 ROOM: 3143 EXHIBIT D

SUBMITTED BY: STEVE MULVENON

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There is another benefit to be gained from such a program. My daughter also remarked that it was fascinating to hear her grandfather talk about his experiences in the war, to hear stories she had never heard, to learn what war is really like. Most of the veterans I know are reluctant to tell those stories. They think it's bragging. They do not see themselves as heroes. But these ceremonies give them the opportunity to relate to a younger generation in a whole new way. It's one thing to read Tom Brokaw's "The Greatest Generation" or go to the movies to see "Saving Private Ryan" and quite another thing altogether to look into the eyes of your grandfather as he describes treating the wounds of his comrades in the South Pacific.

I can only imagine how many other daughters, granddaughters, sons and grandsons would react the same way. The Washoe County School District would be proud to assist in that effort. Please give this bill your support. It's the right thing to do.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to suggest a friendly amendment. We would propose changing the effective date of the bill from July 1, 2003 to "upon passage." Every day that we wait, more of these veterans pass away. There truly is some urgency.

Thank you. I'd be pleased to respond to any questions.

PROPOSED FRIENDLY AMENDMENT
Assembly Bill 52
Washoe County School District
Steve Mulvenon
March 3, 2003

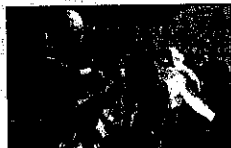
Page 2, Section 2, line 15

15 This act becomes effective upon passage.

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Sooners escape

No. 1-ranked Oklahoma remains undefeated Saturday. Page B1.



Baker's doz

Fans of Gwen Cooper's baked good followed her across northwest Kansas. Pa

Veterans finally get diplomas

Men who entered service in World War II left before high school graduation

By PHYLLIS J. ZORN
HAYS DAILY NEWS

Karl Berndt left the halls of Hoxie High School just before the end of his junior year in 1942. He was the first Hoxie student drafted to serve in World War II.

While his classmates learned algebra, English and science, Berndt worked in the U.S. Army's 27th General Hospital unit in New Guinea and the Philippines. He learned to dress wounds, care for patients and disinfect instruments used by the doctors and nurses.

One of the more memorable lessons Berndt learned was when he brushed a piece of gauze against a wound dressing.

"The doctor threw the instrument about 30 feet," Berndt said. "I learned not to do that again. I learned not to touch anything."

After his military service was completed in January 1946, Berndt returned to Kansas where he became an aircraft welder, then a mechanic.

He never did finish high school, but the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance" played Saturday for him and 13 other Hoxie students drafted into service.

All were given the high school diplomas they'd have earned if the war hadn't called them away. The ceremony was part of "Operation Recognition," an effort to recognize all World War II veterans across the country who were unable to finish high school because of the draft.

Robert McKean, founder of "Operation Recognition," came from Massachusetts to speak at the Hoxie ceremony.

"One day there were carrying textbooks — and the next day they were carrying weapons," McKean told the audience.

"It did not take you 50-plus years to get this diploma," McKean told the veterans. "It took us 50-plus years to do the right thing."

Former Hoxie teacher Benny Rosell, who was a child in the Philippine Islands during the war, thanked the veterans for their sacrifices on behalf of Americans and the other people of the world.

After the U.S. armed forces withdrew from the Philippines, the islands were overtaken by the Japanese, Rosell said, ushering in a time of hardship for all of the Philippine natives.

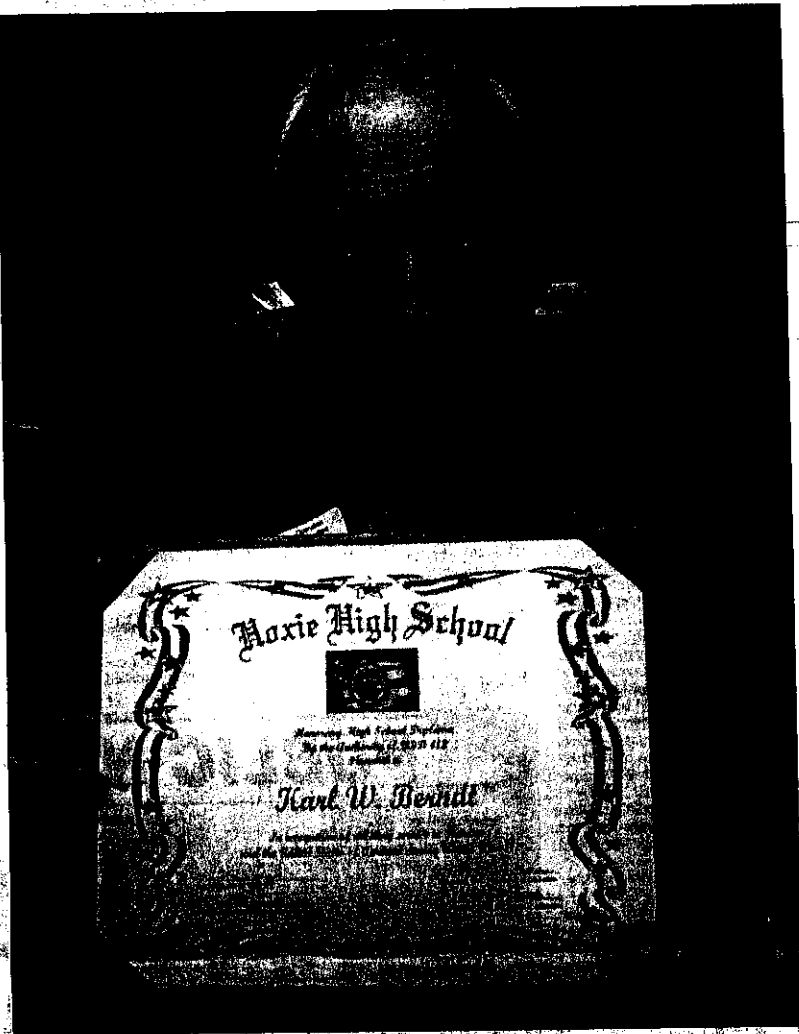
"For three long years, our people suffered," Rosell said.

When they began seeing blue stars on the wings of airplanes flying overhead, he said, the people rejoiced that the American forces had returned.

"We were jumping for joy. Just jumping up and down with great jubilation that we were going to be liberated from the Japanese forces," Rosell said.

The Americans showed kindness to the Philippine children who had suffered during the war, Rosell recalled. When the war ended and the Allied forces departed his homeland, Rosell said, he wanted to go with them.

"I fell in love with these forces because they gave me all sorts of gum



Karl Berndt holds his Hoxie High School diploma, which he received Saturday at the school during a special veterans ceremony called "Operation Recognition."

and candy bars," Rosell said. "They took me to their mess halls where they had bread and meat."

Looking back Saturday over the 58 years since he was drafted, Berndt, now 83, said the only thing he'd do differently is finish high school. He took some correspondence classes but never completed the course.

"If I had it to do over again, I would go ahead and finish high school," Berndt said. "When you stop, it's so hard to go back to it."

The veterans honored:

● Howard Anderson served in the Army from Nov. 19, 1942, to Oct. 26, 1945, on Christmas Island and in the Pacific as a mechanic. He received the Asiatic Pacific Service and Good Conduct medals. In ill health, Anderson's diploma was accepted by his sister, Grace Tice.

● Lawrence Baahman served in the Army from Jan. 25, 1944, to Feb. 21, 1946, in the southern Philippines and Ryukyu as an intelligence scout. He

was awarded the Asiatic Pacific Service, Good Conduct and World War II Victory medals.

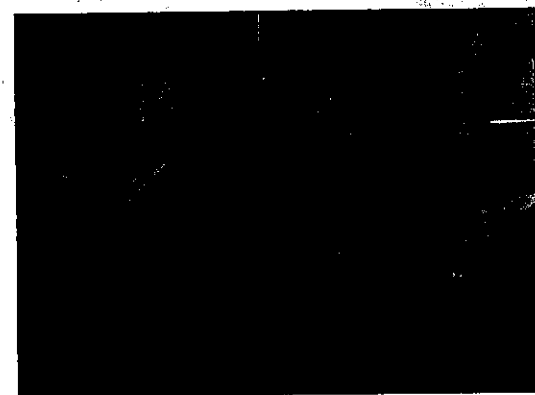
● Karl Berndt served in the Army from March 9, 1942, to Jan. 7, 1946. He was awarded a Meritorious Service Unit plaque and American Service, Asiatic Pacific Service, World War II Victory and Good Conduct medals and a Philippine Liberation ribbon.

● Raymond Dancer served in the Army from Aug. 28, 1942, to Jan. 6, 1946. He was a heavy mortar crewman and part of the invasion forces going ashore at Omaha Beach in France the day after D-Day. He was awarded a Purple Heart, Good Conduct and EAMET medals, Distinguished Unit citation and Combat Infantry badge.

● Edmund Dickman served in the Army Air Corps from Oct. 12, 1942, to Sept. 13, 1945, in Europe and the Mediterranean. He was a crew chief for the planes that destroyed Adolf Hitler's oil supply at Ploesti, Romania. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Distinguished Unit citation and Good Conduct medal.

● Marvin James served in the Army from Aug. 18, 1944, to June 28, 1946. He was assigned to a reconnaissance unit and served in the Rhineland and central Europe. He was awarded Victory, EAMET and Occupation ribbons, a Good Conduct medal and a Combat Infantry badge. He died in 1992, and his diploma was accepted by his sister, Charlotte Ackerman.

● VETERANS / SEE PAGE A3



Hoxie High School sophomore Gina Cressler, 16, combs Raymond Dancer's hair before the opening ceremonies. Also pictured is 17-year-old Andrea Shaw, a senior at HHS, and veteran Edmund Dickman.

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VETERANS: School awards diplomas to 14

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• Verle Miller served in the Army Air Corps from Aug. 24, 1942, to Nov. 22, 1945, in the western Pacific. A telephone operator before being drafted, Miller was in the control tower on Tinian Island Aug. 6, 1945, and gave clearance for takeoff to the bomber Enola Gay as it departed on its mission to drop the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. He was awarded the Asiatic Pacific Service, Good Conduct, World War II Victory and American Service medals.

• Theodore Rall served in the Navy from Oct. 2, 1943, to April 22, 1946. He was a mechanic on PT boats patrolling the western Pacific. He was awarded the Victory, American Campaign and Asiatic Pacific Service medals, the Philippine Liberation ribbon and Presidential Unit Citation.

• Harold Richards served in the Army from Nov. 23, 1943, to March 24, 1946, in the infantry. He was awarded

the Good Conduct medal and American Theater, EAMET and Victory ribbons. He died in 1997, and his diploma was accepted by his son, Larry Richards.

• Michael Schamberger served in the Army from April 1, 1942, to Oct. 23, 1945, in Normandy, northern France, Ardennes, the Rhineland and central Europe. He was a heavy mortar squad leader, and his unit recovered more than \$519 million in Nazi treasures hidden in a mine shaft. He was awarded five Bronze Stars, a Combat Infantry Badge and a Good Conduct Medal.

• Arlan Spillman served in the Army from Jan. 26, 1944, to April 23, 1946, as a paratrooper in Europe. He was awarded the American Theater, Victory and EAMET ribbons and the Parachutists and Combat Infantry badges. He died in 1994, and his diploma was accepted by his brother, Doren Spillman.

• Doren Spillman served in the Army from Feb. 9, 1945, to Dec. 3, 1946, as a warehouse foreman in the Philip-



TOM ELLISON / Hays Daily News

Henry Lee Walker is congratulated and awarded his diploma Saturday afternoon during "Operation Recognition" at Hoxie High School. Presenting the diploma are Hoxie USD 412 Superintendent Don Hague and School Board President Margery Hagan.

pines. He was awarded the Asiatic Pacific Service, Good Conduct, World War II Victory and Philippine Independence medals.

• Loren Turner was drafted into the

Army Sept. 27, 1944, and discharged Sept. 19, 1945. By the time he finished training as a rifleman, 18-year-olds no longer were being sent overseas.

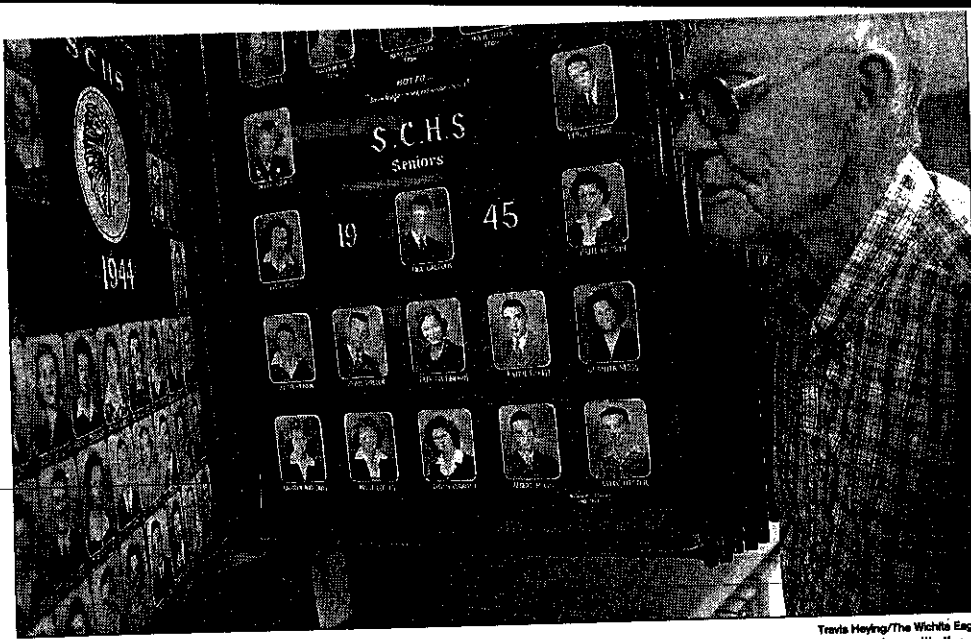
• Henry Walker served in the Mer-

chant Marine from Jan. 18, 1944, Aug. 15, 1945. He sailed on ships delivering ammunition and oil to the Allied forces in the Atlantic, North Mediterranean and Philippines.

department, as any CEO would have

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Lee Walker, 77, looks at pictures of his classmates from the mid-1940s. Walker's picture is absent because he was serving with the merchant marine in World War II. Walker and 13 other Sheridan County vets will get their high school diplomas this month, thanks to a program to honor vets who left school to serve their country.

With highest honors

Fourteen Sheridan County veterans who missed graduating from high school because of the call to duty will receive their diplomas

BY MIKE BERRY
The Wichita Eagle

At first glance, they look like any small group of retirees you might see huddled in a morning coffee shop, quietly trading jibes and timeworn stories. And these elderly men are, in fact, very much like a lot of small-town folks of their generation.

They grew up during hard times, often dropping out of school to help work the family farm. They got married, raised families and, if they were lucky, survived to retire.

But this group of Kansas World War II veterans is special. All were in uniform, having answered their country's

call to arms, and some were in combat thousands of miles away, as their friends back home celebrated graduation day.

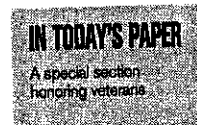
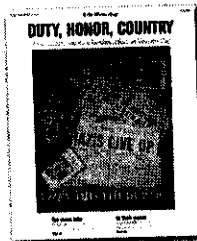
None of them got to walk across the stage of their high school with their classmates, shake hands with the superintendent of schools and the commencement speaker and accept their diplomas.

Two weeks from this Veterans Day, that will all change.

Thanks to "Operation Recognition," a program sponsored by the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs, 14 Sheridan County vets will be the first Kansas veterans to receive honorary diplomas — nearly a half-century after the war interrupted their lives. Three of those diplomas will be awarded posthumously. The ceremony is Nov. 25 at Hoxie High School.

"We owe these veterans so much. However, they are dying at the rate of more than 1,000 per day," said Joanne Emerick, a social studies instructor and the coordinator for the Operation Recognition program at Hoxie High School. "Not much time is left for a grateful nation to say 'thank you' to these veterans."

According to the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs, as of July there were 56,400 surviving Kansas veterans of World War II. There is no way of knowing how many of them would qualify for Operation Recognition, according to Stoney Wages, executive director of the



Cadet Vanessa Heimerman, a freshman at South High School, watches activities during a Veterans Day program Thursday at Century II.

Junior ROTC cadets rally, salute veterans

BY BRIAN LEWIS
The Wichita Eagle

Veterans Day means a lot to Alicia Stiles, a junior at North High School. A captain in her Junior ROTC program, she has relatives who served in the military.

She said that Veterans Day is wonderful because of the opportunity to remember the sacrifices of family members and countless others who served in the armed forces.

For many students, participating in Junior ROTC is a way of honoring veterans throughout the year while also bettering themselves.

Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., a Marine Corps veteran, told Stiles and 1,300 other cadets Thursday at Century II that he hoped the programs would teach leadership skills and patriotism.

"This nation would not be the leader of the world if it were not for the willingness of young Americans such as yourselves to provide the leadership, the patriotism, the commitment and, if necessary, the sacrifice called for in the service of your country."

Thursday's program, organized by Wichita schools, drew an audience of 200 people and was the first of several events honoring area veterans this weekend.

Col. Bob Hester, who coordinates the Wichita public schools Junior ROTC programs, said that ROTC teaches character, education, teamwork, citizenship and discipline.

Lindsey Black, a senior at North High School, said she signed up for

Please see CADETS, Page 19A

Please see HONORS, Page 20A

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HONORING VETERANS

HONORS

From Page 17A

By

commission.
So far, 73 school districts have signed up to take part in the program, which Wages said will continue for as long as it's needed. "We're going to try to do as many of these ceremonies at high schools as we can, so students have the opportunity to see, learn and meet these... service members of our greatest generation."

Doren Spillman, 73, will accept his diploma and another for his brother, Adrian, who died of cancer several years ago. Karl Berndt, 83, is legally blind and will have an escort help him across the stage. Howard Anderson, 83, of Denver, has lost both legs to diabetes and phlebitis and won't be able to attend, but his sister, Grace Tice, will accept his diploma for him.

The men rarely share their stories, not even with their families. And there are fascinating stories to tell: One soldier was among the troops ordered by Gen. George Patton to load up millions of dollars worth of gold and art looted by the Nazis and stored in a salt mine.

Verle Miller, 80, was the radio operator who gave the Enola Gay clearance to make its world-changing flight to Hiroshima to drop the first atomic bomb.

Lawrence Baalman served as a behind-the-lines scout on enemy-held islands in the South Pacific. And Raymond Dancer still carries a plate in his arm, the result of an exploding German artillery shell that blew up a tank on Omaha Beach the day after the D-Day landings.

"I'm going to be there for the ceremony," said 44-year-old Dan Walker, the son of Henry Lee Walker, 77, who served in the Merchant Marine service. "My father doesn't think he would be able to



Travis Hays/The Wichita Eagle

Joanne Emerich escorts Karl Berndt down a hallway of Hoxie High School. Emerich is heading up a program at the school that gives World War II veterans such as Berndt a chance to receive their high school diplomas.

OPERATION RECOGNITION

Any honorably discharged Kansas veteran who served between Sept. 16, 1940, and Dec. 31, 1946, who did not receive a high school diploma is eligible for Operation Recognition.

For more information, contact Marilyn Sommers, action officer for Operation Recognition, at (785) 296-3976.

"He said, 'if you're not going to be in school, you're going to work like I had to all my life. I was real happy to go back to school,'" Dan Walker said. Walker said his district's school board has voted to honor its area veterans with Operation Recognition diplomas next spring and will use Hoxie's program as a guide.

Linda Heskett said her father, Ted Rall,

a math whiz, encouraged her to go back to college, where she got her teaching degree.

"I talked to him about going back (to get his high school diploma), but I think he had too much pride," said Heskett, now a third-grade teacher at Hill City.

But the one thing her father has never done is complain about having to serve during the war. "Dad has never, ever, said anything about having any regrets at all," she said.

"I think one of the threads you will find running through this is that they were all born in the '20s, grew up in the '30s (during the Depression and Dust Bowl years)," said Dan Walker. "All they knew was hardship and self-determination."

Reach Mike Barry at (316) 628-4899 or mbarry@wicheagle.com.

VETERANS DAY ACTIVITIES

One of the largest veterans observances in the state occurs in El Dorado through Saturday.

"The Celebration of Freedom for the Renewal of Patriotism" features family-type activities ranging from band concerts to parades. Among the activities planned for Saturday:

- 8 to 10 a.m., members of the Women's Auxiliary of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1174 will host a biscuit and sausage gravy breakfast at 211 N. Main St. Cost is \$2 for half order, \$3 for full order. Coffee and juice will be included.
- 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., a display of military equipment at Butler County Community Building grounds, 200 N. Griffin St.
- 11 a.m., a "Salute to Veterans" ceremony by members of American Legion Post 81 and VFW Post 1174 at the Civic Center, 221 E. Central Ave.

- 11:30 a.m., a chili feed at McDonald Stadium, 200 N. Griffin St. and at the VFW post. Cost is \$3.50 per person.
- 12:59 p.m., a flyover of El Dorado's Central Avenue from east to west by a B-1B bomber from McConnell Air Force Base. That event will be followed by a memorial ceremony and balloon release in front of the Butler County Courthouse.
- 1:05 p.m., a blast from a howitzer will signal the start of the Veterans Day parade.

- 7 p.m., "Strike Up the Bands," a free concert at El Dorado's Middle School Auditorium.

Other Veterans Day activities in the area include:

TODAY

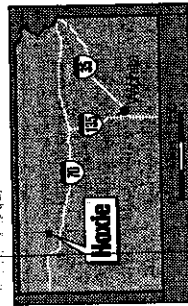
- In the Medicine Lodge area, students will honor veterans with a USO show and reception. The program starts at 10 a.m. at Medicine Lodge High School. The ceremony starts off side the school, where a flag will be raised with honors and taps. Once people are seated inside the auditorium, colors will be posted.

SATURDAY

- A parade in Wichita beginning at 1 p.m. Saturday. The parade starts at the corner of Elm and Main streets, proceeds down Main Street to Douglas Avenue, turns onto Water Street, goes to Waco Avenue and ends at Waco and Thirtieth Street. The parade is sponsored by the Wichita VA Medical Center and Regional Office Center, Disabled American Veterans Service Organization and the VA Employees' Club.

- Haysville VFW Post 6957 will hold a Veterans Day service at 11 a.m. Saturday in front of City Hall, 200 W. Grand Avenue. It will include music by the Campus High School marching band and a 21-gun salute. For details, call 522-1113.

- A Veterans Day ceremony at Maple Grove Cemetery, 1000 N. Hillside Ave., beginning at 11 a.m.



The Wichita Eagle

walk across the stage, physically or emotionally, so I will walk across the stage and accept his diploma for him," said the younger Walker, now a high school principal in White City, Kan.

Dan Walker remembers how important his dad thought education was after he returned from the war. When Dan got suspended from school for three days, his father worked him hard, 18 hours a day, making him shovel manure and dig post holes.

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The 14 veterans who will receive their diplomas in Hoxie

HOWARD H. ANDERSON, 83, Denver

Howard Anderson quit school early to work on his father's ranch but ended up serving in the blistering heat of Christmas Island, about 1,300 miles south of Hawaii, in an Army ordnance company.

"They didn't have any mechanics down there, so when a truck quit, they left it set," Anderson said. "Our job was to go out and find those trucks, tow them in, get them running and take them down to the dock so they could be shipped back to Honolulu for reuse."

He worked as a plumber in Colorado after the war and had to earn a GED to join the union. "The guy in the union never gave it to me. I knew I had a diploma; I just didn't know where it was," said Anderson, who has lost both legs to diabetes and phlebitis. He can't attend the Hoxie ceremony but is proud that his sister, Grace Anderson Tice, will finally pick up his diploma.



Anderson

LAWRENCE A. BAALMAN, 75, Hoxie

While his classmates in the class of '44 walked across the Hoxie High School stage to receive their diplomas, Larry Baalman was in the Philippines, sneaking ashore Japanese-held islands as a scout.

"I was an 18-year-old kid doing the proudest thing I could for my country," he said. "I thought I could lick the whole world. . . . We would give anything for our country, and we did."

He was on the beach at Ie Shima in the South Pacific only a few hundred feet away when world-famous war correspondent Ernie Pyle was killed by a sniper. "He wrote about the common soldiers, and they dearly loved him," he said of Pyle.

Baalman returned to Hoxie after the war and worked as a meat cutter, a barber and, for 27 years, as the town's postmaster. He'd received his high school diploma and, nearly a half-century later, will finally get to participate in the graduation ceremony he missed.



Baalman



Baalman

KARL W. BERNDT, 83, Quinter

Karl Berndt quit school to support the family farm

at the conclusion of the eighth grade. He came from a poor family and had to go to work to help support his mother, doing odd jobs around town and working in the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps camps as a youngster.

He was drafted in 1941 and found himself in the second wave of invading forces at D-Day, going ashore at Omaha Beach with the 30th Division on the second day of the attack. "I got hit just a little," said Dancer, who proudly sports a Purple Heart license plate on his 1996 Chevy Lumina. "An 88 shell hit a tank, and I was too close to the tank, and it got me in the left arm."

He was sent to a hospital in England, where he spent four months recuperating. "They put a silver plate in my arm from the elbow up to the shoulder," he said. Today, when the weather begins to change, he can feel it in that arm.

But when he got back to Hoxie, Dancer nonetheless went to work for the Union Pacific Railroad, doing hard physical labor on the section gang for 34 years before he retired in 1981. Now he's back to doing odd jobs and salvaging copper out of electric motors.

"At my age, if I did go to school, I wouldn't learn anything anyway," Dancer said.

EDMUND R. DICKMAN, 83, Menlo

Ed Dickman lives on the farm where he grew up. By the time his draft number came up in World War II, he'd left school to work as a Boeing Co. sheet metal worker.

He found himself a crew chief on B-24 Liberators stationed in Italy as part of the 15th Air Force.

"I think we hit Ploesti about eight times," said Dickman, who is quietly proud of the part he played in helping cut off Hitler's oil supply at the big tank yards in Romania.

Dickman remembers the names of some of the planes he worked on: the "Old Rugged Curse," the "Inhuman Critter." Those were the ones shot so full of holes it



Dickman



Dickman

"I know they're all heroes to me because if they wouldn't have done what they did, we wouldn't be where we are today," she said.

VERLE D. MILLER SR., 80, Hoxie

Verle Miller wrote off the B-29 bomber known as the Enola Gay as lost at sea. Miller, trained as a cook, was pressed into service as a control tower operator after officers learned he'd once operated a phone company switchboard.

"Col. Tibbets had called in and requested a test flight on the Enola Gay, and I gave him clearance," said Miller, who had no idea the plane was headed for Hiroshima. "When I came back on duty eight hours later, I asked, 'Where's the Enola Gay?' and they said, 'It's not back yet.' So I red-lined him as down at sea."

About a half an hour later, there he was, and here he had dropped the 'Big A,' Miller said. He also cleared the flight that dropped the second atomic bomb, on Nagasaki. Miller left school and married several years before joining the Army Air Corps, serving about three years with the 20th Air Force. He worked at Silver Dollar City in Branson, Mo., after the war before returning to Hoxie, where he worked for the highway department until retirement.

THEODORE C. RALL, 75, Hoxie

Ted Rall left school to farm, but with the war under way, he volunteered for service.

"I told them I wanted to go as soon as I could," said Rall, who joined the Navy and ended up in a PT boat. He was a mechanic, working on the boat's three huge motors.

He went on plenty of night missions, attacking Japanese supply barges in the Philippine Sea.

"It was like we always said: We wouldn't take a million dollars for the experience, but we wouldn't give a cent to do it again," he said.



Miller



Miller

I was coming and they quit," Spillman said with a chuckle.

He learned something about the nature of war, though, in working with POWs. "I found out if you treat them like human beings, they liked you. They were just like us; they had got drafted and put out there to do a job."

Doren Spillman came back to Hoxie and spent 36 years working at a gas station that he eventually owned and then sold to his two sons.

"And now I get a diploma, and I don't even have to study," he said with a laugh. But receiving both his own diploma and his late brother's will mean a lot to him and to their families, he said.

LOREN D. TURNER, 74, Oberlin

Loren Turner could have gotten a farm deferment, but he said, "No, I would just as soon go with the rest of them." He was drafted at 18 in the fall of 1944, went to basic training at Camp Roberts in California then to Camp Rucker in Alabama for infantry rifleman training.

"But by then, they weren't sending 18-year-olds overseas anymore. . . . and I was in Camp Rucker when the Germans and then the Japanese surrendered," he said. He was discharged and boarded a fast train for Denver, where his wife was living.

"Two days after I got there, my oldest daughter was born," he said. That daughter, Sheryl Cervosky of Hoxie, urged him to take part in the Operation Recognition program. He said he will accept his honorary diploma that day. "My daughter would kill me if I wasn't there," he said with a laugh.

HENRY LEE WALKER, 77, Hoxie

Lee Walker was another one of those dry-land Kansans who found himself in the middle of some huge, hostile oceans during the war. He grew up on a farm near Dresden and started high school at Hoxie but never finished.

Instead, after talking to a



Turner



Turner



Schamberger



Schamberger

MICHAEL SCHAMBERGER, 81, St. Peter

Mike Schamberger quit school to help run the family farm after his father had a stroke. He was drafted at 21 and assigned to a mortar crew with the 90th Infantry Division that landed at Utah Beach in Normandy on D-Day-Plus-1.

As the beach was shelled, troops spent four weeks fighting their way through the hedgerows of France. "I'm lucky to be here; I lost a lot of friends," Schamberger said.

Schamberger was among the troops ordered to load trucks with currency, art, jewelry, rare books and the personal belongings Nazis stole from death camp victims. "There was a hundred tons of gold nuggets, all in serial-numbered sacks," he said.

Schamberger received five Bronze Stars during his 3½ years of service. He returned to Sheridan County to farm and work in the oil fields. He retains a keen sense of humor. Asked what finally getting his diploma will mean, he said, "My brother told me maybe now I'll be able to get a job."

ARLAN B. SPILLMAN, Deceased

Arlan Spillman grew up on a small family farm near Hoxie and, like many young men in those post-Depression years, was needed to help work "the home place," so he dropped out of school.

"He was a paratrooper. He would have graduated the year he went to the service," recalls his brother, Doren, who watched in January 1944 as Arlan left to join the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, headed for Europe. Arlan Spillman was there when the war ended, having served in the Ardennes,



Spillman



Spillman



Karl W. Berndt, 83, Quinter

"I was an 18-year-old kid doing the proudest thing I could for my country," he said. "I thought I could lick the whole world. . . . We would give anything for our country, and we did." He was on the beach at Ie Shima in the South Pacific only a few hundred feet away when World War II was coming to its famous war correspondent Ernie Pyle was killed by a sniper. "He wrote about the common soldiers, and they dearly loved him," he said of Pyle. Berndt returned to Hoxie after the war and worked as a meat cutter, a barber and, for 27 years, as the town's postmaster. He'd received his high school diploma and, nearly a half-century later, will finally get to participate in the graduation ceremony he missed.

Karl W. Berndt, 83, Quinter

Karl Berndt quit school to support the family farm before he found himself serving as a technical sergeant aboard hospital ships and helping set up and run a 500-bed hospital in the Philippines.

"A lot of people had malaria, and there were lots of infections. . . . They brought in patients from all the different islands. . . . There was a steady flow of real bad wounded people," he recalled.

Berndt served nearly four years in the Army before returning to the family farm.

Now he's blind, seeing only shapes and shadows, he can't believe he'll finally be getting his high school diploma. "I just never dreamed there would be anything like this in my lifetime."

RAYMOND E. DANCER, 80, Hoxie

Raymond Dancer's formal education ended



Ed Dickman

Ed Dickman lives on the farm where he grew up. By the time his draft number came up in World War II, he'd left school to work as a Boeing Co. sheet metal worker.

He found himself a crew chief on B-24 Liberators stationed in Italy as part of the 15th Air Force.

"I think we hit Ploiesti about eight times," said Dickman, who is quietly proud of the part he played in helping cut off Hitler's oil supply at the big tank yards in Romania.

Dickman remembers the names of some of the planes he worked on: the "Old Rugged Cuse," the "Inhuman Critter." Those were the ones shot so full of holes it was a miracle they flew. He returned to the family farm after the war. He says getting his diploma a few decades late will make it all the more memorable.

MARVIN R. JAMES, deceased

Marvin James was drafted in August 1944, before he finished high school, said his younger sister, Charlotte James Ackerman.

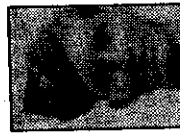
He was a corporal in the 12th Constabulary Squadron of the 141st Infantry Division, in the Rhineland and Central European campaigns.

"Aside from that, I couldn't tell you much about his service," his sister said. She said her brother rarely talked about his wartime experiences. Marvin James farmed near Holyoke, Colo., until his death in 1992.

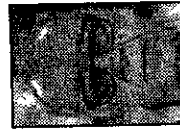
When Charlotte Ackerman learned that Hoxie High School would be honoring World War II veterans who'd never received their diplomas, she put her brother's name on the list.



James



James



Rall

THEODORE C. RALL, 75, Hoxie

Ted Rall left school to farm, but with the war under way, he volunteered for service.

"I told them I wanted to go as soon as I could," said Rall, who joined the Navy and ended up in a PT boat. He was a mechanic, working on the boat's three huge motors.

He went on plenty of night missions, attacking Japanese supply barges in the Philippine Sea.

"It was like we always said: We wouldn't take a million dollars for the experience, but we wouldn't give a cent to do it again," he said.

After the war, he moved to Rhode Island. He married, worked in a rubber company plant, then a textile factory, and came back to Kansas in 1950, where he farmed and worked as a crane operator, building bridges.

On getting his diploma, he said: "It was kind of a dream of mine. . . . I thought about going back to school, but there were a lot of other things I had to do."

HAROLD M. RICHARDS, deceased

Harold Richards, who served with the 100th Quartermaster Company, developed a way of letting his wife, Dorothy, know he was leaving his Army base in Mississippi.

He'd call and say: "I am going to do my laundry tonight." He did that the day after Christmas 1944 but couldn't say where he was headed. Richards ended up slogging through cold, wet and battle-torn France and Germany.



Richards



Spillman

ARLAN B. SPILLMAN, deceased

Arlan Spillman grew up on a small family farm near Hoxie and, like many young men in those post-Depression years, was needed to help work "the home place," so he dropped out of school.

"He was a paratrooper. He would have graduated the year he went to the service," recalls his brother, Doren, who watched in January 1944 as Arlan left to join the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, headed for Europe.

Arlan Spillman was there when the war ended, having served in the Ardennes, Rhineland and Central European campaigns. He was discharged from the Army in April 1946. "He came out of that European deal and then he signed up in the reserves, and he wasn't home very long, and in about a month, he was called up, and he was long gone. He went to Korea," Doren recalls.

Their father had suffered a debilitating injury, and eventually both brothers contributed from their meager military pay of \$30 a month to help their parents operate an old hotel. Arlan Spillman died of bone cancer before reaching his 70th birthday, and his brother, Doren, will accept his diploma for him.

DOREN A. SPILLMAN, 73, Hoxie

"We was just too poor for me to go to school. . . . It was tough times, especially on that damned farm," remembers Doren Spillman, who only attended about a year and a half of high school before following his brother into the Army near the end of the war.

Unlike his brother, Arlan, Doren Spillman went to the South Pacific, not to Europe. He served as a warehouse foreman, working with crews of Chinese, Filipinos and Japanese POWs. "The war was over four days before I got to the Philippines. . . . I said that they heard

during his 3 1/2 years of service, he returned to Sheridan County to farm and work in the oil fields. He retains a keen sense of humor. Asked what finally getting his diploma will mean, he said, "My brother told me maybe now I'll be able to get a job."

Turner

manly ribman training. "But by then, they weren't sending 18-year-olds overseas anymore. . . . and I was in Camp Rucker when the Germans and then the Japanese surrendered," he said. He was discharged and boarded a fast train for Denver, where his wife was living.

"Two days after I got there, my oldest daughter was born," he said. That daughter, Sheryl Cervosky of Hoxie, urged him to take part in the Operation Recognition program. He said he will accept his honorary diploma that day. "My daughter would kill me if I wasn't there," he said with a laugh.

HENRY LEE WALKER, 77, Hoxie

Lee Walker was another one of those dry-land Kansans who found himself in the middle of some huge, hostile oceans during the war. He grew up on a farm near Dresden and started high school at Hoxie but never finished.

Instead, after talking to a fellow he knew who was in the merchant marine, Walker signed up as a quartermaster in January 1944. He helped ferry ammunition, fuel and supplies across the Atlantic and the North Sea, and took part in the Allied invasion at Anzio, Italy.

"We were not there to fight; we were there to take stuff to the fellows who were fighting," Walker said. But it was a dangerous job nonetheless, with enemy submarines, airplanes and surface ships stalking the supply convoys. "The tankers, they started 12 hours apart, and if two out of 12 got through, you thought you were doing good," said Walker, who went on to work on supply ships headed for American outposts in the South Pacific.

Walker

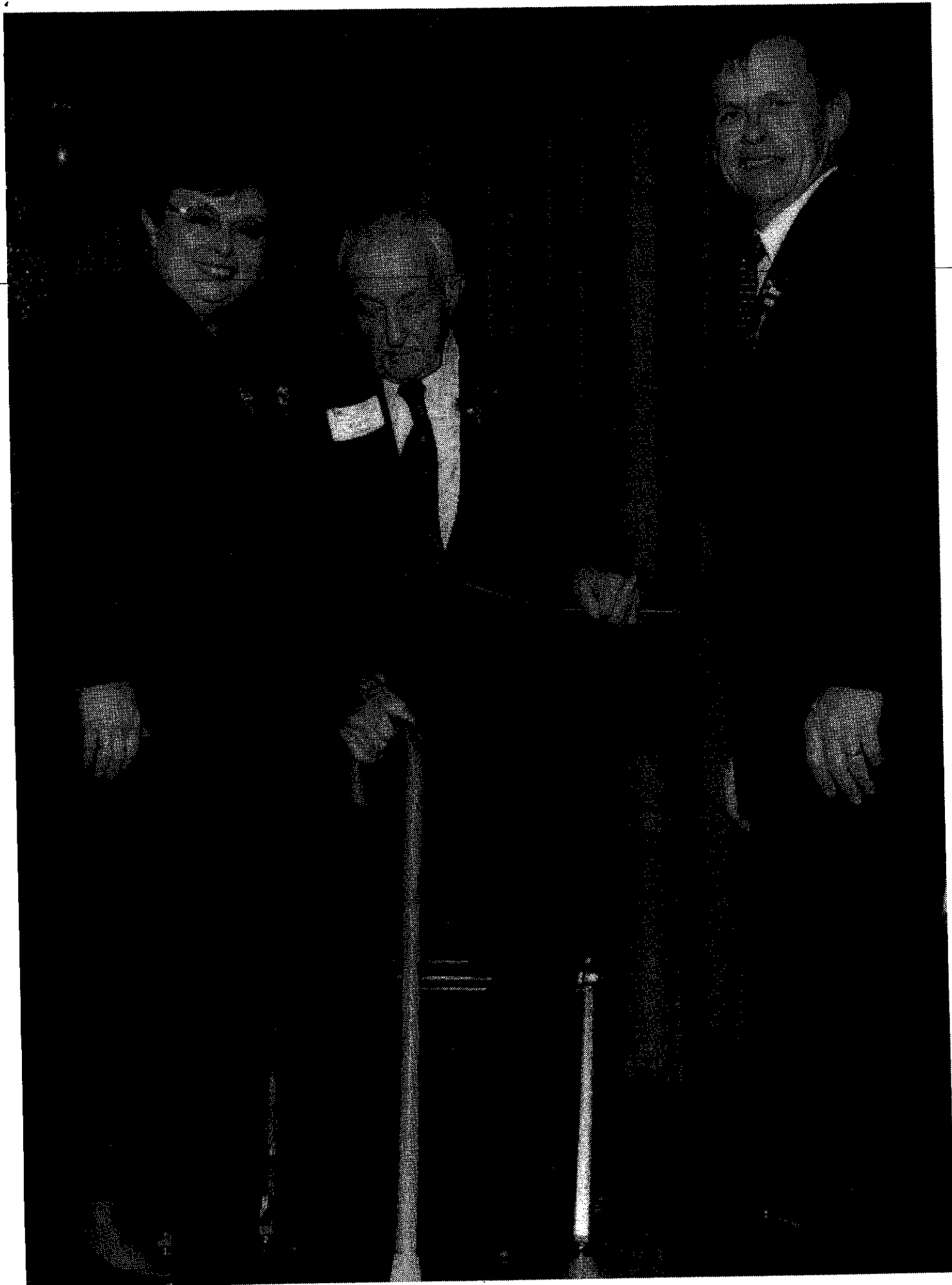


Walker



Walker

He came home to farm and still lives on the farm where he grew up. Will getting his diploma be a big deal? "Yes, it will be, for my grandkids," he said.



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