

Blackberry Festival celebrates 125 years

By Ryan Horton
Managing Editor

The McCloud Blackberry Festival is one of Oklahoma's longest running festivals and coordinators are expecting a great turnout as 2020 marks the 125th annual event.

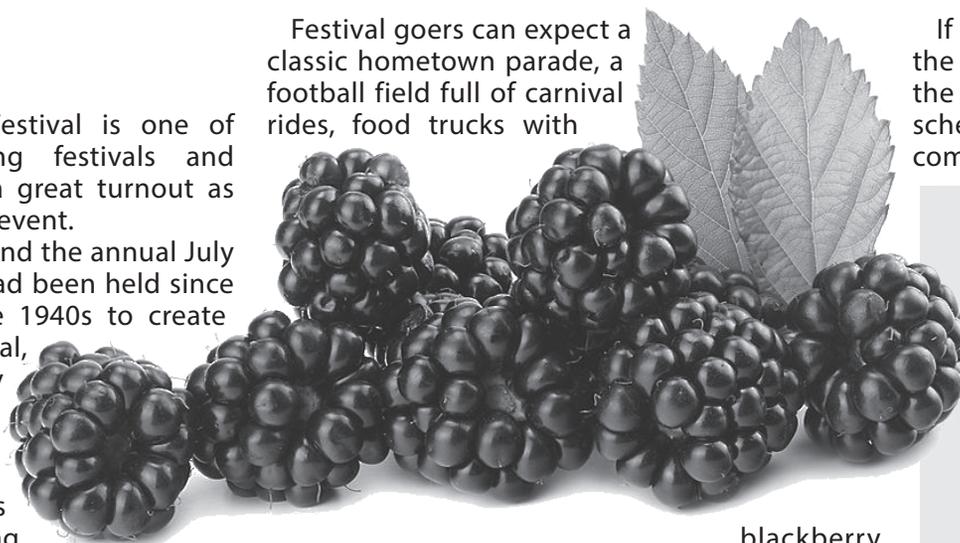
The end of harvest season and the annual July 4 community picnic, which had been held since 1895, were combined in the 1940s to create McCloud's Blackberry Festival, and it's been growing every year since.

Today, this annual festival celebrating the area's agricultural accomplishments and freedom, is still going strong and draws thousands of visitors from across the state and the nation.

The event now attracts nearly 40,000 people, from across the state and beyond, to celebrate McCloud America as the "Blackberry Capital of the World."

This year's events are set for July 10 and 11 at McCloud Veterans Memorial Park.

Festival goers can expect a classic hometown parade, a football field full of carnival rides, food trucks with



blackberry menu items (and all your other favorite festival foods), fresh blackberries by the quart at the Chamber of Commerce booth, craft vendors, old-fashioned kids games (turtle races, sack races and more), live music on stage, the "Cobbler Gobbler" eating contest, the Blackberry Baking Contest, a pageant to crown the new "Blackberry Queen," FIREWORKS and much more.

If you are interested in participating in any of the events, all registration forms are located on the Chamber of Commerce website along with a schedule of events, go to www.mcloudchamber.com or call the Chamber at 964-6566.

July 10

The carnival opens at 5 p.m.

The pageant takes stage at 6 p.m.

"Blackwater Smoke" performs 8-10 p.m.

July 11

7-9 a.m. Parade registration open

10 a.m. Parade

11 a.m. "The McKedy's" perform live

Noon Kids games

3 p.m. Parade awards

4 p.m. Elvis takes the stage

5 p.m. Pageant awards

8 p.m. Festival finale begins at the stage

10 p.m. FIREWORKS

Tuttle Mediflight pilot served in combat zones

By Jayson Knight

Retired Chief Warrant Officer Monty Corley, of Tuttle, served as a special forces helicopter pilot in active combat zones in places such as Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan. Corley now works in Chickasha as a Mediflight pilot.

"Most veterans are modest," Corley said. "They don't want to talk about the things they've had to see or do. You never can really know until you experience it. That's why we volunteered to do what we do, so that you don't have to experience the horrors of combat. If you ever experience that on the homefront, that means we failed."

Corley said honoring veterans can be simple and pleasant.

"For most veterans, a 'thanks,' a handshake, a smile, a wave, is plenty of recognition for us," Corley said. "We volunteered to do what we do. There are all kinds of veterans groups. You can find them at the senior center, the nursing home. Go talk to them in your spare time and say 'hello' in the street if you see one. Most like to tell stories about good friends and great places they've seen."

Corley's wife Misti is very proud of him, and posted the following to Facebook on Father's Day,



June 21:

"Shout out to Montgomery, even though he's not on Facebook because of his hatred of all things social media. I knew he would be a good daddy when I met him. Never imagined he would be the softy he is! No his name is not really Montgomery but that's what he told me when we met when I asked if Monty was short for anything."



Michael Tabaka

Michael Tabaka is a local servicemember who is also a father to Cheyanne Tabaka and husband to Chantal Tabaka. Operations security (OPSEC) prevents Tabaka from sharing too much information about his service, but he is an Air National Guardsman. A Staff Sargent with an AFSC (Air Force Specialty Code) of 3D1X5, Radar Airfield & Weather Systems.

OPSEC is a process that identifies critical information to determine if friendly actions can be observed by enemy intelligence, determines if information obtained by adversaries could be interpreted to be useful to them, and then executes selected measures that eliminate or reduce adversary exploitation of friendly critical information.