

John Mitchell had just 32 days left on his tour of duty before he would have returned home. He was just 31 years old.

Nellie soon received word that her son, Spc4 John Mitchell had been killed in Vietnam. And in a sad twist of fate, on Nov. 11, she received a letter from her son, dated Nov. 7, telling her he would be home in January with an honorable discharge.

One Las Vegas newspaper reported that John had told his mother that there was a job waiting for him in Washington D.C. when he got home. His daughter Debbie thought her father was planning to attend college through the GI Bill once his enlistment was up. And his sister Joyce said that through it all, he still dreamed of flying and had plan to train to become a helicopter pilot.

The body of Spc4 John Mitchell was returned to Las Vegas, escorted by two fellow Green Berets, one from Cham-paign and one from Tennessee, where he was buried with full military honors. He was buried in the Garden of Honor in the Bunker Brothers Memory Gardens in Las Vegas.

The loss was a terrible



blow to John’s mother, as it was to all of his family. Joyce recalled that she thought her mother was having a stroke and took her to the hospital where a doctor looked at her and said he thought she would be okay, but would not admit her because she did not have insurance. A good friend of her mother’s was so incensed that she somehow got word to President Johnson’s wife, Lady Bird Johnson, about this treatment of a woman who just lost her son in Vietnam. Nellie received the treatment she needed.

On March 2, 1967, in a ceremony at City Hall, Col. Robert Osborne presented the family of Spc4 Mitchell a Bronze Star with a “V” for valor and a Purple Heart for his service.

In his letters home, John had written about a young, orphaned, Montagnard boy who he had been caring for, the boy had been very ill. John’s daughter Debbie thought her father may have intended to

bring him home with him. (The young boy recovered and he and his brother were being adopted by one of the medics.)

Joyce was then a young widow two small children and said she felt she had lost her best friend and champion. “He and I were really close,” she said. “He always looked out for me.”

Joyce said the world lost a very special man when they lost John. “He was a very special guy, happy-go-lucky, a really great personality, he was everybody’s friend. He was just a nice fellow and he was very honest.

“You know how when there is a child that is so special, and that was what John was. He was so kind to his mother and his grandmother.”

Debbie Hill still keenly feels the loss of her father, saying that when she lost her father when she was 12 years old she really didn’t understand Vietnam, and that she still doesn’t understand it.

“I can tell you that losing him changed my life. I am so glad the vets get some of the recognition they deserve now days. From my perspective of being the child of a serviceman who was lost in the war, it was devastating. The families suffer a great deal more than what people realize. I suppose I am a little bitter.”

John Mitchell’s brother, Sgt. Billy Dean Mitchell, also served and was injured in Vietnam. He then served as an instructor for airplane maintenance in Virginia.

In 1999, Congress designated the month of May as Military Appreciation Month. The month, which culminates in Memorial Day, a day in which we honor our military members who have died in service, is meant to honor the sacrifices made by all of the men and women who have served. In the telling the story of Spc4 John Mitchell we hope to honor his memory and honor all of the men and women who served in Vietnam. And in telling his story we also hope to honor the great sacrifices made by their families.

BRIEFS

USI Retirees Breakfast

Anyone who worked for the company USI, Quantum, Equistar, LyondellBasel (or any of its other names) in Tuscola is invited to attend a retiree’s breakfast at 8 a.m. Wednesday, May 17, at Yoder’s Kitchen in Arthur. Please call Dan Miller at 217/649-9656 with any questions.

Hidden in Plain Sight program in conjunction with physicals

In conjunction with the Douglas County Health Department’s physicals, the ROSC (Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care) Council is holding a “Hidden in Plain Sight” program to help parents identify objects that may be questionable in their kids’ rooms. They will be setting up a mock teen bedroom and hiding items for parents to find. The target age is middle and high school students.

They will also be distributing locking pill bottles for parents of younger children.

The dates and locations are June 2, Arthur community room, 120 E. Progress St., June 9, Newman Community Building, 207 S. Coffin St., June 16, Arcola Center, 107 W. Main St., June 23, Villa Grove High School, 400 N. Sycamore St., and June 30, Tuscola Community Building, 122 W.N. Central Ave.

The times for the ROSC program will vary depending on the number of volunteers and may be different in each town. To register for school and sports physicals, call the DCHD at 253-4137 or visit online at www.dchealthil.org.

Seek donations for fireworks

The Arcola Rotary Fireworks has become one of the biggest, and literally brightest, events in the region, and they are looking for sponsors to help pay for the display. There are several different levels of giving from as little as \$50 to more than \$5,000.

The event this year starts off at 4 p.m. Saturday, July 1, with an evening of entertainment featuring Captain Rat and the Blind Rivets, food vendors, kids activities and, around 9:30 p.m., a moving display of fireworks including hundreds of shells, the Ultimate Fireball, Vesuvius and the Wall of Fire complete with the Rural Patriot. Sponsors will be featured in advertising and will receive VIP seating on the west side of the Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond football field. Donations can be made at The State Bank of Arthur.

John Adams once said, of the significance of Independence Day: “It will be celebrated with pomp and parade, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other,” and Arthur plans on doing its part. The Arthur Rotary Fireworks promises a spectacular celebration with the best and biggest display in the area.

Sheep to yarn to quilts

Sheep to Yarn to Quilts returns to the Illinois Amish Heritage Center (between Arthur and Arcola) on Saturday, May 13, and hours for the event are 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. This event will include sheep shearing demonstrations, cleaning and dyeing the wool, and spinning it into wool. Weavers will demonstrate weaving with looms, and quilting displays and demonstrations will complete the journey from Sheep to Yarn to Quilts. Visitors will be invited to try their hand at many of the activities being demonstrated.

Weather forecast

Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 77. East wind 8 to 11 mph, with gusts as high as 17 mph.
Wednesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 53. East wind 7 to 9 mph.
Thursday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 82.
Thursday Night: A 30 percent chance of showers after 1am. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 61.
Friday: A chance of showers, with thunderstorms also possible after 1pm. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 81. Chance of precipitation is 50%.
Friday Night: A chance of showers. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 63.
Saturday: A chance of showers. Partly sunny, with a high near 83.
Saturday Night: A chance of showers. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 63.
Sunday: A chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 81.

Skin Cancer Awareness Month

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the world, but there is good news: It’s also the cancer you can see on your body. By learning to recognize the warning signs of the disease, you can identify suspicious spots before they become dangerous. Most skin cancers are highly treatable when diagnosed at an early stage, but if left to grow, they can become disfiguring or even deadly. This is why the early detection of skin cancer is so important — it can save your life or the life of a loved one. May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month. The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends you perform a head-to-toe self-exam every month to look for potential skin cancers. Some things to look for include a growth that changes in size, thickness, color or texture. Skin cancers can appear pearly, transparent, tan, brown, black or multicolored. You should also pay attention to any sore or spot that continues to itch, hurt, crust or bleed or is slow to heal. The Ugly Duckling rule is something else to keep in mind during a self-exam. The rule is based on the concept that normal moles on the body resemble each other, while melanoma (a dangerous form of skin cancer) can stand out like an ugly duckling. These lesions can be larger, smaller, lighter or darker in contrast to surrounding moles. Isolated lesions without surrounding moles for comparison are also considered ugly ducklings. Since all skin cancers present differently, the most important tip is to be on the lookout for anything new, changing or unusual. If you spot anything suspicious during your self-exam, you should make an appointment with a dermatologist right away. You can find more information on how to perform a self-exam and how to prepare for an annual exam on SkinCancer.org.



DOUGLAS COUNTY FARM BUREAU recently held its tenth annual coloring contest. The overall grand prize winner is Cooper Fleming from Atwood-Hammond Grade School. Cooper is a Kindergarten student. Cooper’s picture will be copied to use as placemats at Douglas County Farm Bureau events. For his winning entry, Cooper won the grand prize which is a \$50 Visa gift card and a goody bag from the First Bank of Tuscola. Ashton Cleeton submitted the winning entry for the sixth annual teacher’s coloring contest. Ashton is a second-grade teacher at Arcola. Ashton won a \$25 gift card to Amazon from Douglas County Farm Bureau.

Kindergarten through third-grade students from Arcola Elementary School, Atwood Grade School, Tuscola North Ward, Shiloh School, Villa Grove Grade School, and Arthur Grade School participated in this contest. One first-place winner was chosen from each school that submitted entries. Douglas County Farm Bureau gave each first-place winner a Mcdonald’s gift card.

Pictured are Tim Mooney, vice president, business development of First Bank, Ashley Brian, vice president, cashier of First Bank, Cooper Fleming, and Ericka Crist Douglas County Ag Literacy Coordinator. Submitted photo.



IN RECOGNITION of March being National Agriculture Month, the Douglas County Farm Bureau recently donated two books to area and school libraries. “The Pig War” was written by Emma Band Smith and illustrated by Alison Jay. This picture book tells the story of the boundary dispute in the Pacific Northwest that was ignited because of a wayward pig in a neighbor’s potato field. “Winged Wonders Solving the Monarch Migration Mystery” written by Meeg Pincus and illustrated by Yas Imamura. This book explains the vast number of people involved in finding the migration route of monarch butterflies from Canada to Mexico. It highlights the fact that citizen scientists can have an impact. Pictured is Haley White, director, Arcola Public Library, and Ericka Crist, Douglas County Ag Literacy coordinator. Submitted photo.



CABOT CORPORATION’S Tuscola location provided two \$500 trade scholarships to Villa Grove High School seniors. The Cabot scholarship is awarded to those who will pursue education in a vocational/technical or trade school. The recipients of this year scholarships are Dalton Logan, center, and Gavin Kiser, right, who will be pursuing certificates and/or associate degrees from Parkland College. Presenting the awards is Kim Murphy, left, North American FMO technical manager for Cabot. Dalton is the son of Brenda and Kurt Logan. Gavin is the son of Nathan and Carrie Kiser. Cabot said, “We are committed to delivering contributions that make a positive difference in the local community. Providing scholarships helps with advancing Cabot’s sustainability pillars of building a better future for tomorrow.” Submitted photo.