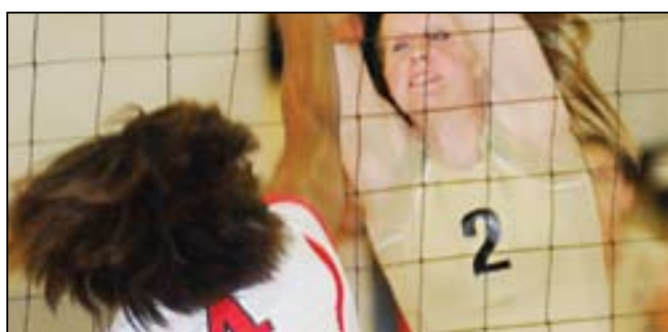


TO THE END

Braves heading into last matchup of regular season. See Page 7.



OUR SALUTE

Special section examines military traditions, Veterans Day events. Inside.

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Photo by Elliot J. Sutherland/The Ottawa Herald

The Franklin County Veterans Memorial was dedicated Nov. 11, 1999. A group of committed volunteers raised money for the memorial for several years.

Veterans Day events aim to honor service

By **JENALEA MYERS**
Herald Night News Editor

Just travel to Ottawa's downtown and you'll see it. The memorial wall that honors the local soldiers who were killed in action. The wall serves as a reminder for loved ones left behind.

That's what this weekend's Veterans Day celebration is all about, Sherry Wright, an organizer, says.

"We remember and will do all we can to preserve that memory of those names on the wall and to honor all our veterans," she said.

But the war memorial wall, Fourth and Main streets, is just one way the public can honor veterans during the weekend's celebration, Wright said.

A parade, war re-enactments, musical performances, craft and food vendors and other activities will highlight the weekend. An opening ceremony is scheduled for 6 p.m. Friday at Forest Park, 320 N. Locust St., Ottawa.

"The ceremony draws a large crowd and distinguished speakers with a music program," Wright said.

Each night will bring entertainment and an opportunity to tour the Healing Field of Flags — more

MORE ON VETERANS



Find out more about Veterans Day events and evolving military traditions. Inside.

than 700 U.S. flags on display at the men's softball diamond at Forest Park. The flags will be on display from Friday through Tuesday for public viewing.

"The main highlight is always the veterans parade of soldiers," Wright said.

The parade will begin at 10:45 a.m. Saturday at Fifth and Main streets and proceed along Main Street to Forest Park. Wright encourages all paradegoers to bring a "Thank a Vet" sign with what they're thankful for written on it.

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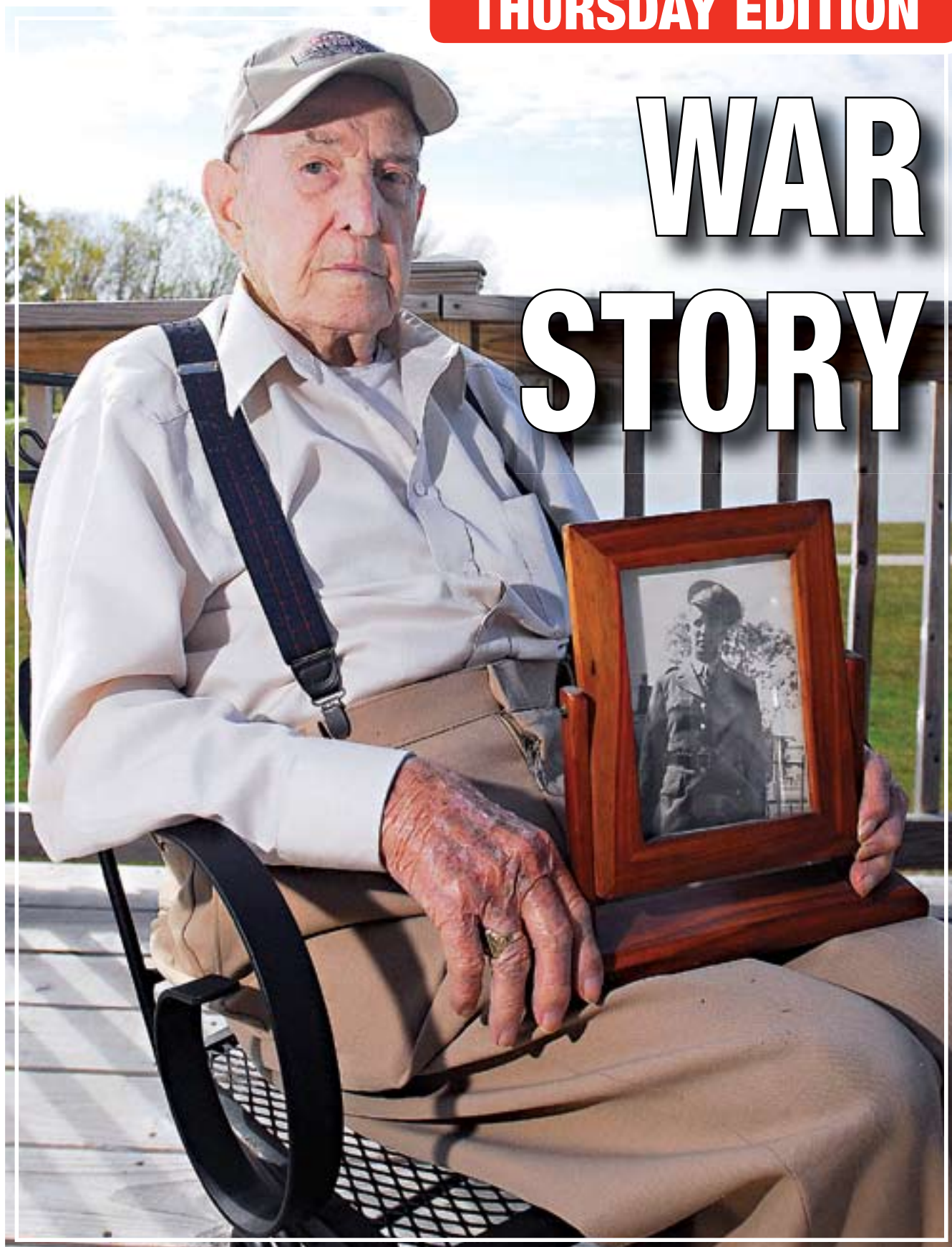


Photo by Elliot J. Sutherland/The Ottawa Herald

Rolan Davis was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1942 and spent more than three years serving his country. Davis now lives in Ottawa with his son and daughter-in-law.

WORLD WAR II FORCED DRAFTEE TO GROW UP FAST

By **RACHEL HAWKINS**
Herald Staff Writer

Rolan Davis is 96 years old, and although he has some trouble walking, he is grateful he has all of his fingers and all of his toes.

Davis, who is the father of Franklin County Sheriff Craig Davis, is a veteran of World War II.

It was in 1941 when he got a letter asking him to come in for a physical for the Army.

"I got my ticket and went and took that physical," he said.

Davis told those giving him the physical that if he were drafted into the war, he wouldn't get married. They told him he would not ever get drafted, so he married his wife, Helen Davis, in 1941.

"When I got home from a trip to California, after our wedding, there was a letter waiting for me," he said. "It said I needed to come back to take another physical."

Davis walked out of that physical with a uniform in his hand.

"Back then, everyone knew about the draft and what it meant," he said. "My dad got his notice to do World War I."

Davis was part of the 531st Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic



Photo courtesy of Davis family

This photo shows Rolan Davis in his full Army uniform.

Weapons Battalion and began training at 6:30 a.m. July 16, 1942, at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Although Davis did not know anyone in his battalion on the first day, he said he quickly made friends.

"I was a loner all the way from

"The hardest part was Christmas."

— Rolan Davis,
World War II veteran

the start," he said. "I went to get on that bus in Topeka, and I was the only one on it. But I ended up making a lot of good friends. A lot of good buddies."

Davis, who worked for Kansas City Power and Light before his time in the Army, used his work skills for his battalion. He strung telephone and other lines for the officers.

"The best part was the stove I had in the back of my truck," he said. "The officers would always come over for coffee. I would always have coffee, and they really seemed to like that."

Davis was a part of the war for three years, three months and 21 days, he said.

"The hardest part was Christmas," he said. "Christmas was rough to spend over there."

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File photo/The Ottawa Herald

Dan Fischer, Lyndon, helps his son Gavin, 2, steer a World War II 1.5-ton, 40-mm anti-aircraft gun last year at City Park, Fifth and Main streets, Ottawa. The gun, commonly known as a Boffer, was made in Sweden in the mid-1930s.



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