Don't forget the Harvest Ball is Saturday

This Radio Shack DVD Player was donated to the Harvest Ball silent auction by Steve and Linda Balas, owners of Eagle Lake Drugstore/Radio Shack.

Kara Supak and Miss Eagle Lake Morgan Perry presented this beautiful fall swag donated by Lake Flowers. *RMC Photo*

Darrell Stancik of The Furniture Shoppe presented the RMC Employee Volunteers with this festive fall wreath. *RMC Photo*

Mary Kay representatives Linda Balas and Sherri Gould put together a basket of their products to make you feel good. *Photo Courtesy of Linda Balas*

Museum has new display on Harris

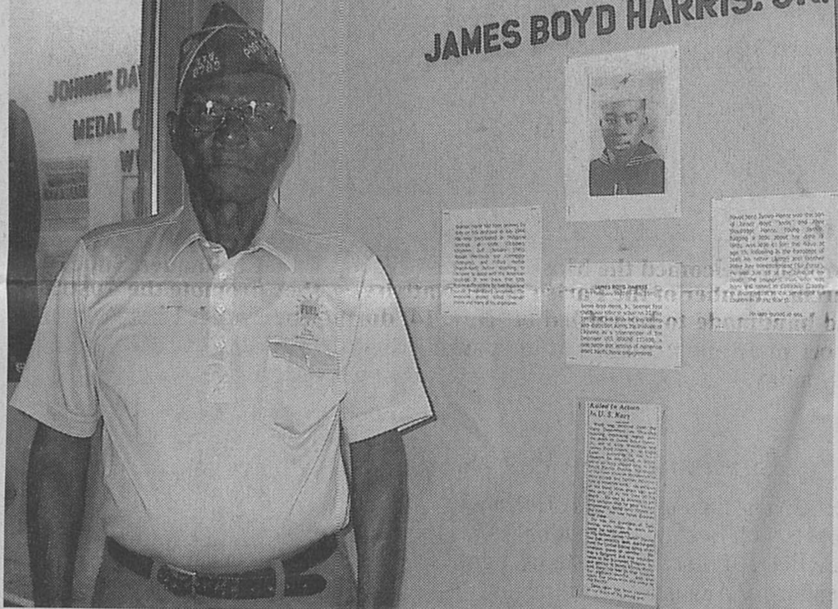
The Prairie Edge Museum (PEM) has a new display and would like you to come by and take a look. The display is about James Boyd Harris Jr.; February 19, 1927 – May 27, 1945

Seaman First Class James Boyd Harris Jr. was killed in action May 27, 1945, while serving with distinction during the invasion of Okinawa as a crew member of the USS Braine DD-630, a nine battle star veteran member of Pacific task forces.

Harris had been ordered for duty on this destroyer in July 1944. His ship participated in Philippine landings at Leyte (Oct.), Lingayen Gulf (Jan. 1945), Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor (Feb.), and Pollack Harbor (March-April) before steaming to Okinawa to assist with the American landings. It was there that the Braine suffered two sudden hits by Japanese suicide (kamikaze) airplanes. The explosive impact killed Seaman Harris and many of his shipmates.

Naval hero Harris was born in Eagle Lake, the son of James Boyd "Jodie" and Alice Woolridge Harris. Young James, fudging a little about his date of birth, joined the Navy at age 15, following in the footsteps of both his father (Army) and brother Miller Ray Westmoreland (Air Force). He was only 18 when he was lost, the youngest man in Colorado County to die in action in World War II.

PEM acknowledges the assistance of Rev. J.H. James, Joe Fling and Ervin Hurd with this display.



Ervin Hurd, a local VFW member, is pictured with the Harris display at Prairie Edge Museum.

Where is Mrs. Colorado County?

Mrs. Texas is proud to announce its search for married women residing in Texas who wish to receive the honor of representing their community in the 2004 State Competition. Selected applicants will receive an official title and banner and become their community's representative. The State Competition will be held at the Grapevine High School Theater, June 18-20.

Feelings are strong in promoting Mrs. Texas with elegance, grace and dignity. Fifty percent of the points to achieve the title of Mrs. Texas are determined by an interview with each contestant. There will also be evening gown and fitness competitions.

Mrs. Pageants allow women who have devoted much of their current lives to family, marriage and career to showcase their accomplishments and reach out to other women like themselves. The woman who is crowned Mrs. Texas 2004 will go on to represent the great state of Texas in the only nationally televised pageant for married women, Mrs. America. Mrs. Texas will spend two fun-filled weeks at the Hilton Hawaiian Villages in Honolulu Hawaii.

The reigning Mrs. Texas is Cheray Josiah. She has been married to John for two years and a graduate of Sam Houston State University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. As Mrs. Texas, Cheray is working with the America's Promise organization. Their mission is to mobilize people from every sector of American life to build the character and competence of our nation's youth.

Come join this prestigious group of women who are dedicated to marriage, family and community. Those interested should contact Tracy Crist, Mrs. Iowa 1995, at 817-442-8896 or email her at tracy-crist@msn.com.

Little places eighth in Pennsylvania

Jacob Little of Garwood captured eighth place individual at the Eastern National Intercollegiate Meat Judging contest held in Wyalusing, Pennsylvania, Oct. 4. The American Meat Science announced the winners.

Top individuals were Cody Bullock, first place, Texas A&M University; Craig Bosworth, second, Texas Tech University; Chancie Moore, third, Texas A&M University; Lauren Grimes, fourth, Texas Tech University; Deidra Harris, fifth, Texas Tech University; Matthew Luensmann, sixth, Texas A&M University; Tyler Hickman, seventh, Oklahoma State University; Jacob Little, eighth, Texas A&M University; Todd Dickinson, ninth, Oklahoma State University; and Jared Williams, 10th, Colorado State University.

Top five teams were: Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University, Oklahoma State University, Colorado State University and The Ohio State University. In total, 54 contestants from seven teams participated in the contest.

Future fall contests include Excel High Plains, Plainview, Texas, Oct. 19; American Royal, Emporia, Kansas, Nov. 2; and International, Dakota City, Nebraska, Nov. 16.

Congratulations, Jacob!

"SAvvy SeniOR"

you ask the SeNior questioN ~ We FiNd the SAvVy ANsWer

Senior Debt

Dear Savvy Senior,

I thought it was supposed to be children who worried about their parents during retirement. Instead, I'm worrying about my kids! I'm 78 and my wife is 77. We live comfortably but modestly. When I finally retired 13 years ago, I owned my home and had no debt. Between the company pension, Social Security and my personal savings and investments, we looked to be fine for many years to come. But when I look at my children I'm not so sure they're close to being financially prepared, despite the fact that they talk about "early" retirement. The oldest is in her mid-50's now, and the other two are not far behind. I tell them that retirement will come quicker than they think. Yet, none of them seems close to paying off their home. And I've noticed that they're comfortable with debt that would have kept me up nights pulling my hair out.

I'm just wondering: Am I alone out here, or are others noticing the same thing?

Debt-Free Dad

Dear Debt-Free,

The phrase "senior debt" used to conjure up images of college seniors graduating with loans they took out to pay for their education. Not so, today. Your observation is right on the money, so to speak. All I can tell you is get ready for it to get worse before it gets better because the boomers - let's hope they're not busters! - will begin retiring soon, and many of these people have lived with debt their entire life. At the same time, it's also important to note that much has changed for seniors.

Unsavvy Figures:

Not long ago, CBS News reported that the amount of household debt for people over the age of 65 has tripled in the last decade. Keep in mind, these are not the boomers, so the entire problem can't be strapped to their backs.

Other figures indicate that nearly 60% of all seniors today carry some debt, compared to 35% a decade ago.

Bankruptcy courts also have seen a sharp increase in the number of seniors declaring bankruptcy. A Harvard study found that they are the fastest growing group of bankruptcy filers. In 2001, the number of seniors declaring personal bankruptcy hit 82,000, up 244% from a decade earlier.

What's Changed?

Many people used to see debt as a disease to be avoided, but the disease is not quite the killer it once was, when credit card companies were gouging people with rates or 20 and even 24%. Interest rates are at record lows, which means carrying debt is not the burden it once was, either. However, it also means we should be paying off debt sooner. With good credit people can refinance homes in the 5% range and even buy cars with next to no interest. However, that means seniors who rely on interest income are getting hammered. It's a classic Catch 22.

You mentioned your pension, which gave you a guaranteed defined benefit. You knew where you stood and how much you needed to save to make ends meet in retirement. 401(k)s, which many people have today, offer certain advantages, but they have one big drawback: People with them are relying on what are known as defined contribution plans, which don't guarantee a worker a set income at retirement. A bad choice or a bit of bad luck, like a drastic drop in the stock market, and they could lose a good portion of their retirement.

Last, but certainly not least, we all know what has happened to medical costs. They're climbing much faster than the rate of inflation and putting seniors on fixed incomes in a tremendous bind. It's true that previous generations of retirees didn't have the level of debt that we do today, but healthcare wasn't as severe a burden back then, either.

Savvy Tips

There some obvious things people can do to help get out of debt, for instance, shopping around for cheaper credit cards, refinance their homes if they're still paying on them and counseling from a professional, is a very good idea for anyone contemplating retirement. But, two things may ultimately be needed to reverse this trend for our society. We're going have to get medical costs under control, and, more importantly, we have to learn to live within our means. Which means changing our lifestyle, a much tougher trick.

Resources

•CardWeb.com, Inc.: A comprehensive guide to low-interest, no-fee and secured credit cards. Call 1-800-344-7714 or www.cardweb.com.

•National Foundation for Consumer Credit Counseling: Free or low cost counseling available. Call 1-800-388-2227 or visit www.nfcc.org.

•National Association of Consumer Advocates: A non-profit association of attorneys and consumer advocates committed to representing customers' interests. Call 1-202-452-1989; www.naca.net.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK, 73070; www.savvysenior.org.