



"Fisher Billy" was built by Noah Myhre and Sebastian Bot-hun. Mascot photo by Scott Thoma



Audyn Traen and Stella Gorecki with their scarecrow "Farmers Jimmy and John". Mascot photo by Scott Thoma



"The Headless Horseman" was the scarecrow that Reed Sorenson and Brisbyn Traen put together. Mascot photo by Scott Thoma

# Scarecrows adorn St. Edward's School

## 3rd, 4th graders build five exhibits in front of school

By Scott Thoma  
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The third and fourth grade students came running out the front door at St. Edward's as though school were letting out for the summer.

Each student was flashing a wide smile as they raced to five scarecrows exhibits adorning the front of the school. Following close behind was their teacher, Mrs. Robin Traen.

The students each stopped at the exhibit they constructed to have their photo taken next to it. They all seemed proud of their projects, as evidenced by the wide smiles on their faces.

The scarecrow constructions came after Mrs. Traen read her students a short story called "The Scarebird" by Six Fleischman, as she has done in past years. The story centers around a farmer who makes a scarecrow that he refers to as a scarebird. The scarecrow soon becomes the lonely farmer's companion out on the farm.

"The students were then put into pairs to decide how they would like to make their scarecrows," Mrs. Traen said. "The students decide what they need for their scarecrow and bring it from home."

The students worked on the scarecrows, which are propped up against trees in the front of the school on West Fourth Street, for a week and just recently completed them.

"It was so much fun," said Addyson Pohlen.

The other students at St. Edward's then vote on the scarecrow that they like the best.

"The students have a great time doing this," said Mrs. Traen. "We do it every year, so all of the kids get a chance to make a scarecrow."

The students then name their scarecrow exhibits. The five are: "The Headless Horseman", "Farmer Fill", "Billy Fisher", "Farmers Jimmy and John", "4-H Dog Show".



Charles Myhre and Kaitlyn Gorecki (not pictured) were the creators of "Farmer Fill". Mascot photo by Scott Thoma



This scarecrow creation called "4-H Dog Show" was made by Addyson Pohlen and Debbie Beisler. Mascot photo by Scott Thoma



Following the folding of the flag, it was presented to Elaine Johnson, Earl Halvorson's sister. Mascot photo by Scott Thoma

## Halvorson

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With the help of the Lyon County Veterans Administration and 7th District Representative Michelle Fischbach, among others, the new marker became a reality, and a proper and accurate memorial service was held this past Friday at Hemmes Lutheran Cemetery.

Earl's body is forever entombed at sea with his 79 crewmates that were aboard the Grayback, but his new military marker now lies in the Hemmes Cemetery beside his parents, Johnnie and Amelia Halvorson, and his grandfather Theodore Halvorson.

"This gives me some closure," said Elaine, wiping her eyes while seated inside a tent canopy that shielded her from the wind. "I think this will be it now. This makes me feel better."

Elaine, 92, was one of five siblings and is the only surviving family member that knew Earl. She was 13 years old when Earl enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1941.

"Earl was such a kind man," she recalled. "He always told me how proud he was of me."

Thomas Johnson, Elaine's son and Earl's nephew, played "Taps" on a bugle during the ceremony. He also spoke eloquently about his uncle during

the service. "October 10th would have been Earl's 97th birthday," said Thomas, who has Earl's Purple Heart at his home in Georgia. "So, we all might have been here today, having known Earl at one time or another, celebrating the accomplishments of a long life. Unfortunately, that is not the case and there is only one of us who knew Earl at all ... Elaine Johnson, my mom."

Deb Anderson, Elaine's daughter, who lives with her



Pastor Lyle Snyder of St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Marshall, shown her sprinkling earth on Earl Halvorson's grave marker, officiated at the memorial service. Mascot photo by Scott Thoma

in Marshall, also spoke during the ceremony, explaining the grueling process she and her mother went through to get the new marker issued. She also thanked all those who helped them along the way.

"Without everyone's help, this would not be possible today," Anderson said. "We can't thank you enough."

Earl was born on a farm outside of Minneota in Nordland Township. When his father died in 1932, his mother and four siblings moved into Minneota. He was confirmed at Hope Lutheran Church and attended public school until the 10th grade.

In 1940, his family moved to Marshall where he attended Marshall High School.

On Dec. 20, 1941, just 13 days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Earl enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the age of 17.

"On the day Earl left for the Navy, my mom was in bed, and she heard Earl and her mother saying their goodbyes," Thomas Johnson spoke at the memorial service. "My mom, who was 13 at the time, decided not to get up so that they could have the moment to themselves. That was the last time they saw Earl."

Following a call by President Roosevelt for volunteers to enter Submarine Service, Earl answered that call and was transferred to Pearl Harbor. He scored at the top of his class in mine school and was ordered to report to active duty as a torpedoman on the USS Grayback. He served on her 7th, 8th, 9th, and her eternal war patrols.

The 10th patrol would be the Grayback's last. Between 1942 and 1944, the Grayback was credited with 19 enemy vessels sunk, including a submarine and a destroyer.

The Grayback was headed back to Pearl Harbor when it was reported missing. On April 9, Earl's mother received a telegram from the U.S. Navy informing her that "Earl Eugene Halvorson, Seaman First Class USN, is missing following action in the performance of his duty and service to his country".

The U.S. Navy eventually



Earl Eugene Halvorson, Seaman First Class, U.S. Navy.

declared all those aboard the Grayback as killed in action, listing the date of death as Jan. 12, 1946, which has been inaccurately engraved on Earl's marker until the new marker was issued and unveiled this past Friday.

"Now we know," Elaine said before repeating more softly, "Now we know."

Thomas Johnson reminded everyone how his mother remained in bed as young girl when Earl went off to war.

"After a lifetime of regret for having stayed in bed on the day Earl left for bootcamp, it's my mother's turn to say goodbye," his voice breaking as he spoke.

Several others spoke at the memorial service, including Fischbach, who along with District Director Ben Anderson and District Outreach Representative Cory Becker, were instrumental in getting the new marker issued.

"I felt it was important to be here for the family," she told the Mascot. "This is an honor to be here honoring Earl. He missed so many Christmases and Easters and other family gatherings. It's a nice way to remember him."

Pastor Lyle Snyder of St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Marshall officiated at the service and sprinkled earth on Earl's new marker as a final respect.

Elaine then rang the Honor Bell three times at the conclusion of the service.

She wept again as her daughter Deb clutched her arms.

"She really needed this," Deb said in a whisper.

## Chasing our Tails

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Owen Schott donated the building located at 218 N. Jefferson St. to Area Development of Minnesota (ADOM) in 2018.

ADOM then sold the building to Trachtenberg for \$15,000 in April of 2019. Trachtenberg also gave ADOM a \$5,000 donation to help with other community developments.

Chasing our Tails Inc. moved equipment into the building in late July of 2019 and began operations shortly after that.

Many community members had questioned whether the building was now vacant. The sign on the door had been removed and unopened boxes were on the ground next to the garbage bins, which were also filled with boxes enough to raise the lids.

Trachtenberg, who previously operated Chasing our Tails in New Hampshire, wanted to re-locate in the County Fair building in Marshall but withdrew after neighbors of that property were concerned about the smell the operation would emit and complained to the Marshall City Council.

Instead, Trachtenberg purchased the Schott building that had been vacant for 20 years. He also purchased the former Salmon Chevrolet building in downtown Tracy for his primary production plant. Chasing our Tails also operated a processing facility in Sanborn.

Trachtenberg purchased the 215,000 square foot former Del Monte plant in Sleepy Eye in December of 2020 to support expanded packaging operations and new business lines, according to a press release that was sent to the Mascot in December.

Trachtenberg also owns multiple farms in Minnesota where he raises cows and hogs for slaughter for use in his pet treats. He also owns poultry and red-meat slaughterhouses within the state.

Among the dog and cat treats Chasing our Tails produces and sells are smoked bones, pig ears, dehydrated and freeze-dried treats, and antler chews.

The Chasing our Tails website still includes Minneota as its address.



Elaine Johnson, Earl's sister, rang the Honor Bell three times at the conclusion of the memorial service with the help of her daughter, Deb Anderson. Mascot photo by Scott Thoma