

OBITUARIES

Founder of defunct theater workshop in Belfast dies

BY JUDY HARRISON
BDN STAFF

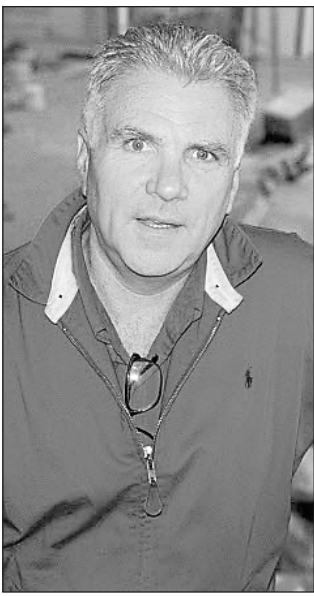
The man who founded the National Theatre Workshop of the Handicapped in New York City and gave it a summer home in Waldo County for more than a decade died Monday in Philadelphia of heart failure at the age of 72, according to the website Jesuit.org.

The Rev. Rick Curry, who was a Jesuit brother in 1997 when the organization purchased the Crosby School in Belfast, was born without a right forearm, according to previously published reports.

When he became a priest at the age of 66, he received a special dispensation from the Vatican because, under canon law, a priest must have two hands to celebrate Mass, according to the New York Times.

The school fell on hard economic times and never recovered, Belfast City Councilor Mike Hurley said Tuesday.

"Some people consider him to be a scam, but I never did," Hurley said. "He had people come here, some of whom had multiple handicaps. They had a wonderful time in Belfast. I loved that. Being in a bar, seeing 15 handicapped people having a wonderful time was great. "I don't know how much long-term good it did, but it was great when they were here to share Belfast



Rick Curry

with us," he said. "In the end, [the theater workshop] got caught up in the collapse of the economy, but none of that takes away from what Rick did tried to do."

Curry's more recent projects, the Wounded Warriors Writers Workshop and the Academy for Veterans grew out of the theater workshop, according to the student newspaper at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. The programs help soldiers disabled in combat to rebuild their lives.

"With the disabled, you need a guide dog, you need a wheelchair, and people get that," Curry said in a 2011 interview. "But you also need your spirit lifted. You need to make art. You need to tell your

story. You need to create."

The Crosby School is a three-story brick building, located in the heart of the city's downtown. It was built in 1923 as the Crosby High School, with funds raised by individual and city contributions. It was featured in the 1957 movie "Peyton Place," and remained the high school for Belfast teenagers until 1965, when it became the junior high. In 1993, the junior high moved to a new middle school building across town, and the Crosby School was empty for three years, until city officials decided to sell it for \$200,000 to the National Theatre Workshop of the Handicapped.

Curry said the group invested about \$3.5 million into the building to add theaters, lounges, apartments and an elevator.

After it fell into disuse by the theater company, Belfast residents complained that the structure was not being maintained and was beginning to deteriorate. When the theater workshop defaulted on a \$700 sewer bill, the city foreclosed on the school in 2010, with councilors voting to give it back the following year only after the workshop made a good-faith effort to repair and maintain the landmark structure.

In August, the asking price was just under \$1 million, according to a previously published report.

Mexican-American War vet to get funeral service

BY MARY WICOFF
COMMERCIAL-NEWS

DANVILLE, Illinois — An Army private who died in the Mexican-American War in 1847 is coming home to rest — at least in spirit.

A memorial service will be conducted early next year at the Danville National Cemetery for James Thompson, a farmer in Ridge Farm who died in Tampico, Mexico, at age 52.

Thompson is the great-great-grandfather of Barbara Thompson Switzer, a Westville native who lives in Cayuga, Indiana. She spent 10 years researching her family and finally tracked down her long-lost relative.

Switzer discovered Thompson died in a hospital while serving with Company I, 2nd Illinois Infantry Division in 1847, and was buried in a mass grave.

She tracked down his military record, contacted the National Cemetery and arranged to have a marker placed in the memorial section.

"I feel attached to this great-great-grandfather," Switzer said, fondly referring to him as Grandpa James. "It's sad his wife never had a burial for him and his five sons never officially said goodbye."

Switzer said her main objective was to recognize his military sacrifices.

"This man died for his country and was never honored," she said.

Rudi Shelton, representative at the National Cemetery, agrees with Switzer, saying, "He's been gone 168 years, so I think he deserves something."

Shelton thinks Thompson will be the oldest or second oldest veteran honored at the cemetery. The memorial headstone will be placed at No. 58, the first spot in the second row.

The memorial section at the front of the cemetery honors those whose bodies can't be recovered, such as vets missing in action, lost at sea or cremains scattered, Shelton said.

Shelton is impressed

with Switzer's diligence in tracking down her ancestor, adding, "She's really done her research on him. It's exciting."

Switzer began immersing herself in genealogy after the death of her daughter, Karissa Ceader, in 2002 in a car accident. After that tragedy, she said, "I just wanted to feel connected some way ... to let my mind heal."

Research into the Thompson line was a distraction. As she worked, she traced him to Humrick near Ridge Farm, but couldn't find his grave. Fourteen of her ancestors are buried at the Humrick cemetery, including four of Thompson's sons.

She did find a plot which may be for James' wife, Elizabeth May, who died in 1858.

Last year, she went to a military website for genealogists, and found out more about James, including his regiment. She called the national cemetery at Tampico, Mexico, but was told his name was not listed there, and he probably was buried in a mass grave. In 1847, there was no way to bring bodies home, Switzer said.

She then contacted the Danville National Cemetery, and was surprised to learn that he was eligible for a marker. She wrote to the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C., to get proof of his military service, and about six months ago, she received the proof in the mail.

The day after Thanksgiving, Shelton told Switzer that he had received approval to order a marker.

Switzer has plans for a service in January or February with full military rites, an honor guard and presentation of the U.S. flag. As the only living direct descendant, Switzer will accept the flag.

Switzer also arranged to have Thompson's name added to the veterans' memorial in Ridge Farm. Also listed are her father, her grandfather (World War I) and great-grandfather (Civil War).

Switzer gathered her information from several sites, including the Dan-

ville Public Library and the Illiana Historical and Genealogical Society.

In "Portrait and Biographical Album," she found a biography of Samuel Thompson, a well-known farmer in Elwood Township, who was a son of James Thompson.

James, born in 1795 in Kentucky, came to Blue River Valley, Ind., as a young man and then to Vermilion County. He and his wife, also from Kentucky, had 10 children; five died as infants.

The couple settled in Humrick in Love Township in 1825, and he bought 110 acres of farmland.

When he was 38, he served in the military in 1832, and was wounded during the Black Hawk War in Illinois. After that, he purchased 120 more acres of farmland in Ridge Farm. Those may be land grants from his service in the Black Hawk War.

When he was 51, he enlisted in the Army at St. Charles so he could serve in the Mexican-American War. He died on Oct. 6, 1847, in Tampico, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

Many people in Switzer's family have served in the military, including son Michael Ceader of Westville, who served with the Marines during Desert Storm. His father served in Vietnam.

Switzer watched her son go to war, and has an appreciation for those who have served. It's important not to forget the sacrifices, she said.

She became emotional when she saw the paper at the National Cemetery acknowledging Thompson's service. "He gave his life for his country," she said. Switzer, who retired from Eli Lilly in Clinton, Indiana, works as an administrative assistant for Holmes Law Office in Covington, Indiana.

TALES BEING TOLD

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ERIC M. WHITE

PALMYRA - Eric Michael White, 32, died unexpectedly December 20, 2015 at his residence with his partner Jamie Rogers by his side.

He was born July 6, 1983 in Leominster, MA, a son of Bruce and Irene (Paschke) White. His hobby was building computers from the ground up. Eric will be remembered as a free spirit.

He is survived by his father of Westboro, MA; his mother and step-father Russ Leighton of Newport; Jamie's children; 3 sisters, Tricia White of San Diego, CA, Sonya Leighton of Newport and Erica Leighton of Davie, Florida.

His wish was to have his ashes spread in the ocean. Cremation arrangements are by Crosby & Neal, Newport. Those who wish may leave written condolences at www.CrosbyNeal.com

EUGENE EARLE EVERETT

PRESQUE ISLE - Eugene Earle Everett, beloved husband of Sylvia Eda Peterson, passed away on December 16, 2015 in Sykesville, Maryland, following a lingering illness. Gene was born on December 17, 1923 in Presque Isle, Maine, the son of Thomas Earle and Lela (Moore) Everett.

He graduated from Presque Isle High School in 1941. In 1942 he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. With the Second Division, he served as a radio operator in the Pacific campaign from the invasion of Saipan through the occupation of Japan. He earned a Purple Heart on Saipan and advanced to the rank of sergeant. He remained a life-long member of the Second Division Association. On his return to Presque Isle he worked for the Northern National Bank and received advanced training under the GI bill. During his years in Presque Isle Gene was active in the American Legion, the Congregational Church, the Society of Mayflower Descendants, and other organizations.

After a career in banking and thirty years in the wholesale grocery business, he retired in 1984 and moved to Florida. He was a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity for ten years in Ocala, and was named volunteer of the year in 2003. Sylvia and he lived in Maryland near their daughter for the remaining years of his life.

Besides his wife of sixty-eight years, he is survived by his son Michael Everett and wife Paula and Paula's children Andrew Hiss and Kate Hiss, his daughter Dr. Beverly Everett and husband John Kocak. He is survived by his sister Marjorie (Mrs. Dana Bishop) of Presque Isle and his brother Ronald and wife Jo Ann of Manassas, Virginia, and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his brother Howard.

A graveside service will be held in the Spring.

Donations in Gene's memory may be sent to the Second Marine Division Association, Scholarship Fund, PO Box 8180, Camp Lejeune, NC 28547 and Gilchrist Hospice, 11311 McCormick Road, Ste. 350, Hunt Valley, MD 21031-9981.



PETER MANSFIELD HURD
LIEUTENANT COLONEL
(RET) USAF
1936 - 2015

HOULTON - Peter Mansfield Hurd, 79, of Houlton Maine, passed away on December 16,

2015, after a courageous battle with Alzheimer's. Peter was surrounded by family at the time of his passing at an assisted care facility in Ormond Beach, FL. Peter was the loving husband of Alma Jean (Dwyer) Hurd of Orient, ME, for 61 and a half years. He was born on November 19, 1936 in Houlton, the son of the late Norman Arthur and Frances Vivian (Mansfield) Hurd, and preceded in death by his sister, Beverly (Hurd) Euerle and his grandson, Peter James Lannan.

Peter grew up in Houlton, graduating from Houlton High School in 1954. He earned his Bachelor's degree from Parks Air College in St. Louis, MO and Masters Degree in Business Administration from George Washington University in Washington, DC. "Pete," as friends and family called him, was commissioned into the United States Air Force in 1957, assigned as an Electronic Warfare Officer on B-52 bombers with the Strategic Air Command and RC-135s of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing. In 1968-69 he served his country in Vietnam with Detachment 1, MACV-SOG /Special Operations Group, First Flight Squadron flying covert missions in the highly modified C-123K earning him the wings of "Air Commando." Pete retired from the USAF in 1979 after his assignment to the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense at the Pentagon in Arlington, Va., after 22 years of honorable service to his country. After retirement, Pete returned to Houlton as a Defense contractor with Detachment 2, "Big Safari" program and later taught students at the Greater Houlton Christian Academy about Aviation and Amateur "Ham" Radio.

Peter is survived by his loving wife, Alma Jean, and his four children, Gordon, Mansfield Hurd, Andrea Jean Lannan, Steven Charles Hurd and Wendy Ann Pugh. He always enjoyed and loved his 13 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial contributions may be made in Pete's name to the "Wounded Warrior Project" at PO Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675 or to the Alzheimer's Association Maine Chapter, 383 US Route 1, Suite 2C, Scarborough, ME 04074. Memorial and burial services will be held in the spring. For online condolences please visit www.bowersfuneral.com

Transgender support group being formed

BLUE HILL — The Transgender, Family and Friends Group offers a time for sharing stories and provides support for families, friends and transgender people of all ages. The group will meet at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 7, and Thursday, Jan. 21, at the First Congregational Church of Blue Hill, 22 Tenney Hill. The sessions are open to all who are interested. Group organizers said they respect the sensitive nature of the topic and the need for privacy concerning it. Therefore, these sessions will be designed similar to the Twelve Step programs.

Topics the group will discuss at the next meeting will include what the hopes and goals for the group might be, and how often to meet once a month, twice a month or weekly. Plans also call for special speakers. Handout materials to be available in future sessions.

For information, contact Susan Yaruta-Young at 460-6155 or email syyoung@myfairpoint.net.



ROBERT EDWARD BLAKE

BUCKSPORT - On December 21, 2015, Robert Edward Blake, 73, went home to be with his Savior Lord after an 18 month battle with pancreatic cancer. He was born on January 13, 1942 in Gray, the son of Carleton Blake and Helen Pettigill Blake.

Bob and his wife, Shirley Reed Blake, were married at Boston University, Marsh Chapel on December 18, 1965. Last Friday they celebrated 50 years of marriage. He served in the US Army from 1969-1972 as a Chaplain stationed at Fort Dix New Jersey. One year in Vietnam, then Fort Eustis Virginia. He also served 10 years in Naval Reserve prior to Active Duty in the Army.

Bob graduated from Monmouth Academy 1961, Boston University 1965 with a BA degree, BU School of Theology 1969, and University of Maine MA in social work 1978. He was ordained an Elder of the United Methodist Church in 1969. He served full time churches in Old Orchard Beach 1966-1967, Peaks Island 1967-1969, Strong and Kingfield 1972-1974, Corinna and Hartland 1974-1978, and part time churches over the later years at Robinson and Perry, Brooksville and Penobscot, East Bucksport UMC and Sandy Point Congregational Church. He also worked for the state of Maine about 25 years as a social worker in Washington and Hancock counties; then for Eastern Area on Aging 5+ years and the state Adoption Services.

Bob loved books. He became a trustee and eventually President of the Buck Memorial Library, helping to obtain crucial grant money to fix the outside walls of the building. He also worked as Hancock County Hospice volunteer and as a member of St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Ellsworth, on several committees.

Robert is predeceased by his parents and his sisters; Betty Skilling, Genevieve Gafowsky, and Margaret Schnur.

He is survived by his wife, Shirley, his daughter, Heather Blake and her children Benjamin, Meaghan, and Khaleb; his son Russell Blake and wife Julie and their children, Jasper and Zoe and his daughter, Kerry Vigevani and her husband John and their children Sarah, Leah and Savannah. He also leaves two nephews which were like his brothers; Gary Crosse and Richard Skilling and their wives Rozaline Crosse and Kathy Skilling.

The service will be on Saturday, December 26, 2015 at 12 noon with visiting hours before the service between 10:30-11:30 a.m. at St. Andrew Lutheran Church. In lieu of flower, donation in memory of Bob may be made to the St. Andrew Lutheran Church, 175 Downeast Highway, P.O. Box 145, Ellsworth, ME 04605 or the Buck Memorial Library 47 Main St. P.O. Box DD Bucksport, ME 04416. Arrangements are in the care of Mitchell-Tweedie Funeral Home 28 Elm St. Bucksport. www.mitchelltweedie-young.com

Walk-in flu shot clinic in Unity

UNITY — Unity Pharmacy and Unity Barn Raisers will host a walk-in flu shot clinic 3-6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 29, at Unity Community Center, 32 School St.

Bring your insurance card, as most insurances will cover the fee. For those whose insurances don't cover it or for those who are uninsured, there is a \$20 fee.

For information, call Mary at 948-9005 or email programs@unitybarnraisers.org.

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In Memoriam

In Loving Memory Of
BLANCA J. SKIDGEL
Aug. 26, 1939 - Oct. 7, 2005



Happy Wedding Anniversary on the 23rd and a Merry Christmas! Love, Herbert; and sons, Tony, Herbert Jr. and John