



# INDEPENDENT ELLSWORTH COUNTY REPORTER

Conserving water  
is important!  
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## Celebrating a century

BY KAREN BONAR  
Ellsworth County I-R

Even though his birthday was in April — April 18 to be exact — 100-year-old Eli Hernandez took to the skies May 31 to skydive as a way to celebrate a century of life.

“That was probably one of the best days of my life,” the Kanopolis resident said.

The jump happened in Abilene at Skydive Kansas State.

“The airplane is nothing new,” Hernandez said. “I was a paratrooper during WWII. I’ve been doing this since I was 19 years old.”

He left his service as an Army paratrooper with eight jumps under his belt, and opted to walk away from jumping out of airplanes.

Until he turned 90. “I came back and decided on my 90th birthday I’d make a jump,” he said. “(After the war) I said I’d never do it again, but at 90, I felt like I wanted to, and I did.”

“I decided if I lived, on my 100th birthday, I’d make a jump. If I live another year, I’ll make another jump next year if I’m able.”

While his jumps early in life were solo, his most recent adventures were tandem jumps, where he was strapped to another skydiver.

“They’re all qualified and all super people,” Hernandez said.

Kanopolis native Jesse Magana is the safety and



Eli Hernandez, bottom, completes a tandem skydive jump May 31 in honor of his 100th birthday.

training adviser for Skydive Kansas State. “Not very many people skydive when they’re in their 90s, especially when they’re triple digits,” he said. “He (Hernandez) jumped with us when he was 90 years old. I can’t believe it’s been 10 years.”

Hernandez jumped tandem and was strapped to another skydiver for the entire experience. “The instructor has over 6,000 skydives,” Magana said. “We’ve probably taken just a handful of people in their 90s.”

“He’s definitely the oldest person we’ve taken. We think he’s the oldest person to jump in the state of Kansas.”

As Hernandez was preparing, he had a few questions.

“He asked how high we were going. He said, ‘I really wish we could go to 1,200 feet, because that’s how high they jumped in WWII. They did their



At about 10,000 feet, Eli Hernandez makes his 10th skydive. To celebrate turning 100 years old, he decided to go to Skydive Kansas State in Abilene, where he had jumped for his 90th birthday, and complete another skydive.

static jumps from 1,200 feet,” Magana said. He said the club’s plane climbs to 10,000 feet before the participants embrace the sky. “We had just the right amount of wind, and when the instructor brought him in, he stood

him up,” Magana said. “He had a perfect landing.”

For Hernandez, it’s just another day in the life. “Around my house, we’re always doing things extraordinary,” he said.

“There’s never a dull moment at my house. “Right now, I’m researching bungee jumping out in Oregon. I think that would be rather interesting — a 300-foot bungee jump. I don’t know if it will materialize or not, but I’m thinking

about it.” Hernandez said he didn’t seek publicity for the jump, but the news was picked up around the state.

“I was surprised, but I never asked for (publicity),” he said. “If it comes, it comes with the territory — just like a movie star. If you’re good, you’re going to get a lot of notoriety.”

In addition to a special 100th birthday party April 19 and his May 31 skydiving adventure, Hernandez took the April 28 Kansas Honor Flight from Wichita to Washington, D.C.

“It was a very good experience for him. He said he had never had such a wonderful time,” said Elena Gonzalez, Hernandez’s daughter. “He was the only WWII vet. They made a big deal because he was 100.”

Gonzalez said she lived in the D.C. area, and visiting the nation’s capitol wasn’t a new experience for her father.

“He loved the Library of Congress; he never visited anywhere else,” she said.

On the Honor Flight trip, however, Hernandez visited many of the memorials and the National Mall.

“There were school kids that lined the sidewalk, sang the Star Spangled Banner and thanked him for his service,” Gonzalez said.

She said other tourists enjoyed witnessing the experience, especially a

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## Harvest hits rain delay

BY KAREN BONAR  
Ellsworth County I-R

Harvest began Monday in Ellsworth County, before overnight rain showers halted its progress.

“We cut about 100 acres yesterday,” Travis Warta said. “I think we have 1,300 left to cut.”

Riley Zamrzla, general manager at the Ellsworth Co-op, estimates less than 1 percent of the crop was cut before the rain.

“We had anywhere from an inch-and-a-half to two-and-a-half inches,” he said. “It’s a good thing and a bad thing. We’re thankful for moisture, but we want to get harvest kicked off.”

Warta said harvest was off to a good start — before the rain.

“Conditions were good and the yields weren’t bad — I’d say 40 or 50 on the one field we did finish,” he



KAREN BONAR/Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter  
Travis Warta and his nephew from Minnesota, Carter Warta, harvest wheat Monday evening.

said. “We went to another field later last night. Conditions weren’t as good because the wheat fell

down and it was harder to cut.”

Craig Dinkel, Crop

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## Golfing for a good cause

BY ALAN RUSCH  
Ellsworth County I-R

On June 17, 2022, Ryan Peschka and Mark Cunningham of Ellsworth did the unthinkable. They successfully walked 100 holes of golf in one day (over 33 miles) at the Ellsworth Golf Course to raise funds for the Ellsworth County Cancer Fund.

The unique challenge was something few would attempt — much less finish — and even fewer would attempt it twice.

However, tomorrow, the two will once again be back at the Ellsworth Golf Course for a 6 a.m. tee off, this time aiming for 101 holes of golf in a day to raise funds for the Frances Claussen Charitable Foundation.

“We want to keep the Frances Claussen Charitable Foundation going strong,” Peschka said. “We’re now into our third year and we’ve had two successful fundraisers the last two years, and it was some-

thing where we thought we maybe should think of something different to do this year to attract a different crowd.

“Mark and I survived three years ago doing it for the cancer fund, and I was kicking it around several months ago. I told myself you just need to take on the challenge and do it for the Frances Claussen Foundation.”

When Peschka threw that idea out to Cunningham, he didn’t say no.

“He basically said if you’re crazy enough to do it again, then I’ll do it too,” Peschka said.

Peschka then told Cunningham they had to set the bar higher since they knew they could make 100 holes. That’s when they decided on 101 holes.

“At the end of the day, it’s all about raising money for the foundation,” Peschka said.

“I’m jacked,” Cunningham joked. “My part is pretty easy. These guys (Dawn Dolezal,

Frances’ daughter and chair of the foundation board, and Peschka, Frances’ grandson and foundation board member) go through a lot of work every year running a successful foundation, and what they do behind the scenes is spectacular, so if I can help any way — help them to help other people — that’s why I’m here.”

When asked what the hardest part of completing the original 100 holes in one day was, Cunningham simply said “to survive.”

“You change clothes a lot,” he said. “And stay hydrated.”

“For me, it was not really taking many breaks and sitting inside in the air conditioning,” Peschka said. “We would get done with nine holes and I’d maybe sit down for a couple of minutes, but I tried to not go inside. I didn’t want my body to get cooled off because it was a hot day. I just figured let’s just plow through it and not try to

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Ross Janssen’s  
Weather

June 18- June 24

WEDNESDAY 86/63  
Partly cloudy

THURSDAY 95/68  
Mostly sunny

FRIDAY 97/72  
Sunny and breezy

SATURDAY 97/73  
Mostly sunny & windy

SUNDAY 95/73  
Mostly sunny & windy

MONDAY 94/70  
Mostly sunny & breezy

TUESDAY 89/67  
Isolated storms

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CLASSIFIED

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