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Defenders Against Terrorism Get A Memorial Of Their Own

By GINGER GRANATH

The day before he would have turned 22 years old, Marine Lance Cpl. Aaron C. Austin was memorialized in a special ceremony in front of the Lea County War Memorial at the courthouse.

A sizable crowd gathered at the southwest corner of the courthouse lawn yesterday morning, June 30, for the official unveiling of the new black granite marker added to the memorial.

"He loved his country, he loved the Marines, and he loved what he was doing," Dorris Yarbro, local veteran historian and master-of-ceremonies, told the audience. "Aaron's family, the state, and the nation has suffered a great loss here."

Yarbro led the crusade to get the granite war memorial on the courthouse lawn two-and-a-half years ago. At that time, the names of Lea County's fallen soldiers were added under the headings World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

But now, with this new conflict in Iraq, the memorial needed a new marker with room to add more than one name, if necessary.

Austin's friends and family members stood under the shade and watched as Austin's mother, De'on Miller, and American Legion Commander Charlie Pappas cut away the black plastic

covering the memorial to reveal the words "America's Fight Against Terrorism and Tyranny" on the front, with only one name engraved on the back: Aaron C.

Miller with his branch of service, the U.S. Marine Corps, and a photo of him.

Memorial

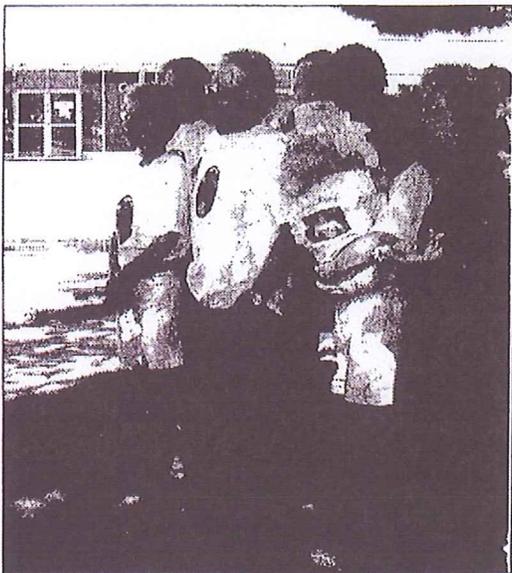
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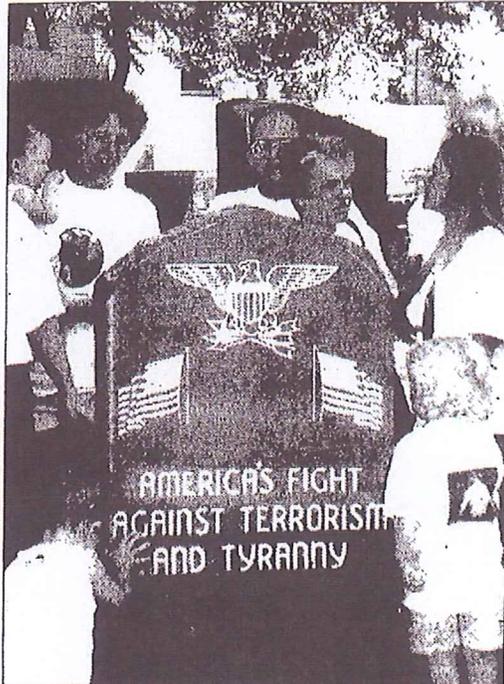
De'on Miller and Charlie Pappas (right) receive assistance from a county employee Wednesday morning while they cut away the black plastic to reveal the newest addition to the Lea County War Memorial — a black granite stone engraved with only one name: Miller's son, Lance Cpl. Aaron C. Austin. Also pictured is Dorris Yarbro (left), master-of-ceremonies for the dedication.

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"It's a continuation of the overwhelming support I've been experiencing since April 26," said Miller following the unveiling. "It's amazing what people do, like Dorris Yarbro, and Bobbie Bradford. They care, . . . they care about all of them. I'm proud to be in a community that gathers around like this."



A large group of Aaron Austin's family and friends gathered at the courthouse Wednesday morning, one day before Austin would have turned 22 years old. Pictured in the front, left to right, De'on Miller, Austin's mother; Harvey Grigsby, Austin's grandfather; Lisa Jewell, Austin's aunt holding her grandson Zach Jewell; and Austin's grandmother.



Following the unveiling, family members gathered around the new marker to share tears and laughter.