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## A place of rest & remembrance

**Class of 1965 to honor classmate lost to Vietnam War**

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

No matter how many class reunions the Hermiston High School Class of 1965 has, one absence is particularly conspicuous.

The class lost Gordon Spearman Jr. just six years after graduation. He was killed in action in Vietnam, like 40,934 others of his generation. Another 17,000 died in accidents or due to other causes or were presumed dead but never recovered or died later from wounds suffered during the war. He was one of 686 Oregonians who died in the Vietnam War and one of five who listed Hermiston as their hometown.

Spearman's class will dedicate a bench at McKenzie Park in his honor on Friday during their 50-year class reunion.

**REUNION**

Organizer Dan Jamison remembers the moment he knew Spearman, a former football teammate, was never coming home.

"I found out in the *Hermiston Herald*," he said. "I don't remember exactly what the article said, but I remember I was upset."

Jamison was stationed with the Army at Fort Carson in Colorado that year. But his parents paid for him to get his hometown newspaper by mail each week, and one day he opened it to find the news everyone of his generation dreaded in those days: A classmate had been killed in action.

Staff Sgt. Gordon Spearman Jr. was 24 at the time, on his second combat tour in Vietnam. He was a team leader of the Charlie Company Rangers, 75th Infantry when he was killed March 10, 1971, by small arms fire in the Binh Dinh province.

To Jamison, however, Spearman was the "spark-plug of the team" during one of the best football seasons the Hermiston Bull-



Class of 65 reunion organizers (left to right) Dennis Williams, Cindy Edwards, Connie Ferranti and Dan Jamison discuss the final details of a memorial ceremony for fallen classmate Gordon Spearman Jr.

STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL



A photo of Gordon Spearman Jr. sits on a memorial bench in his honor as Class of 1965 reunion organizers prepare for a dedication ceremony.

STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

dogs had played in a while. He remembered the bruises the dedicated right guard would sport after giving it all he had during particularly tough games.

Jamison said the news of Spearman's death rocked the class of just over 160 students.

"We knew people really

well," he said. "It was still a small school."

Reunion organizer Dennis Aiken said his younger brother, who was serving in Vietnam at the time, was the first person from Hermiston to hear of Spearman's death. His squad arrived to pick up a prisoner Spearman had captured earlier

that day and a ranger told him.

"A guy stepped out of the bush and asked, 'Are you from Hermiston? Gordon was just killed,'" Aiken said.

He remembered Spearman as someone who "didn't take himself too seriously."



This photo of Gordon Spearman appeared on the front page of the *Hermiston Herald* after his death.

Dennis Williams, also a former football teammate of Spearman's, said he was a "very coachable" player on the field and a funny, likable student in the classroom.

"Everyone liked him," he said. "He was a good guy."

By the time Spearman was killed just about everyone Williams graduated with was in the service. One classmate fled to Canada, another had a young family and a couple more were excused from service

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## 15-year-old arrested for 7-Eleven robbery

Hermiston police arrested a 15-year-old early Tuesday on suspicion he robbed a convenience store at gunpoint.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston in a written statement reported officers at 12:24 a.m. responded to 7-Eleven, 775 S. Highway 395, on a report that an armed robbery just occurred. Hermiston police, along with officers from neighboring Stanfield and Umatilla police and the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, searched the area for the suspect. He was described as a young male, wearing a purple and yellow basketball jersey, a black T-shirt and a bandanna, who fled carrying a black bag with an undisclosed amount of money.

About an hour into the investigation, Hermiston police Capt. Darryl Johnson saw a teenage boy matching the suspect description in the area of East Jennie Avenue and Northeast Third Street.

"The male fled on foot but was eventually caught," according to Edmiston.

Officers detained the teen and seized a black Wells Fargo bag with money police believed to be from the crime, Edmiston reported, along with a loaded handgun.

Edmiston also said Hermiston detectives questioned the teen before booking him with the county's juvenile department in Pendleton.

## Art in the negative

**Hermiston scratch artist's work featured in library display**

By **SEAN HART**  
Staff Writer

Most art is created by adding color and shape, but Mary Ella Hoffman prefers to scratch it away from a black canvas.

The 66-year-old Hermiston artist, whose work is on display at the Hermiston Public Library this month, said she discovered scratch art about eight years ago. After taking a class from a former Heppner resident, she began perfecting the process that would eventually win awards at county fairs in Umatilla and Morrow counties.

**ART**

**See for yourself**

Mary Ella Hoffman's scratch art is on display this month at the Hermiston Public Library, 235 E. Gladys Ave.

"It's really rewarding," she said. "I like showing it in the county fairs."

Hoffman prefers to create animals, but any images can be created using the art form. Scratch art uses a Masonite board covered with a clay substance that is covered by a black ink, she said. To create the image, she uses a series of tools with different tips to scratch away the black ink, exposing the white layer beneath.

"You just scratch the hairs, so you can imagine a picture is covered with millions of little lines," she said. "When you're all done with your scratching, it is black and white, and then you take wa-



STAFF PHOTO BY SEAN HART

Hermiston artist Mary Ella Hoffman demonstrates how she scratches away the black coating on her "doodling board" to create images using scratch art during a reception in her honor Thursday at the Hermiston Public Library. The finished raccoon is a piece she created using the technique. Her work will be on display at the library throughout the month.

tercolors and put in your hints of color."

Hoffman starts by blowing up a picture to the size of her board, usually eight inches by 10 inches.

She then traces the picture onto tracing paper to ensure proper proportion and placement on the

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