

**Second Section**  
**Thursday,**  
**November 16, 2000**

## Local 4-H youth exhibits broom making skills at Farm Family Expo

By John McQuary  
 Co. Ext. Agent for 4-H Youth Dev.

While much of our past is being lost, a local youth is mastering the dying art of broom making. Fifteen-year-old Chris Robbins, son of Mitchell and Peggy Robbins of Brodhead, is in his second year of making brooms the old fashion way. He uses a winder that was constructed with wooden pegs to hold it together and is probably over 100 years old. The winder is used to attach the broomcorn to the handle. His vice, which is used to tie the brooms, has the date of September 10, 1878. His shaker style brooms are not only a work of art, but useful as well. Chris is able to make a finished broom in about twenty minutes. They can be seen and purchased at the craft shop in the log cabin village in Renfro Valley. Chris became interested in broom making while helping to finish the log cabin village in Renfro Valley in Spring of 1999. While helping to finish the village, he would go into the broom shop and try his hand at winding broomcorn on the handles. He continued going back as often as

possible. Mrs. Betty Lindblom, a former broom maker and a clerk at the craft store, was very encouraging to Chris to keep practicing. While visiting the Indian Fort Theatre Crafts Fair that summer, he met Mr. Jim Harmon, a broom maker from Springfield, Ky. Mr. Harmon volunteered to come down one day and work with Chris at the broom shop. These days at the village was all it took for Chris to realize the importance of keeping the dying art of broom making alive. Chris was able to purchase his own equipment from Mr. Harmon this past summer. He has been very helpful and supportive in Chris's work.

Having his own equipment has allowed Chris to attend a couple of festivals this fall. Chris attributes his ability to demonstrate his craft in public to his experiences with the Rockcastle County 4-H program. The opportunities of speeches, demonstrations, variety shows, poster contests, and many other related 4-H activities, has given him the confidence to achieve whatever goals he sets. Chris hopes to demonstrate his art of broom making at several festivals next year.



Chris is showing off several brooms he has made. Chris was a 4-H Blue Ribbon Showcase winner at the 2000 Kentucky State Fair.



Chris Robbins, of Brodhead, is shown here making a broom at the Farm Family Expo in Laurel County. The Expo was sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service.

**Deadline for next week's Signal is 5 p.m. Monday**

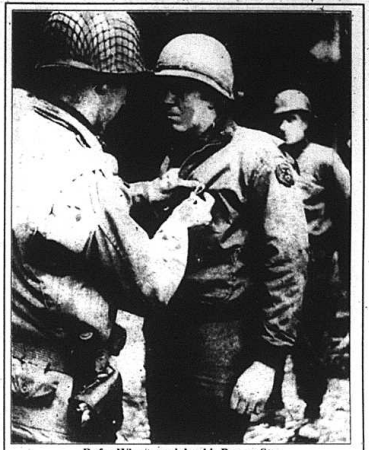
# A tribute to Rufus Wheat

Mr. Rufus Wheat, 79, of Rt. 1, Mt. Vernon, served in the U.S. Army as a tank destroyer gunner during World War II in the 773rd Battalion. He participated in battles in Scotland, England, Wales, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany and Czechoslovakia. Mr. Wheat served under General Patton in the Battle of the Bulge. He stated that, "Blood & Guts Patton" appeared to have enjoyed battle, had no fears and expected the same from his soldiers. While engaging in battle in 1943, Mr. Wheat rescued a fellow soldier from a burning building and was awarded the Bronze Star.

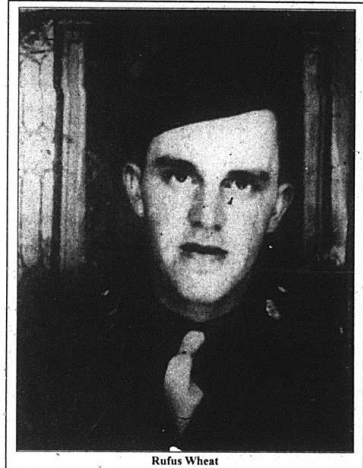
Many times the soldiers had no concept of time or place as they often

engaged in battle day and night for long periods of time. "We had a job to do and had to be prepared to meet the enemy at all times," Mr. Wheat stated. "Many times we would go out in the morning with our crew and come back without our best buddies. The worse thing about the war was that you could not always protect the other fellow. Many lives were lost and it hurt me not to be able to protect and defend myself and everyone else, too."

Mr. Wheat married Mattie Ruth Kimell in 1950 and they have nine children: Barbara Reppert, Lavania McNew, Brenda Harrison, Connie Bullens, Burt, Marvin, James, Paul and Tim Wheat.



Rufus Wheat receiving his Bronze Star



Rufus Wheat

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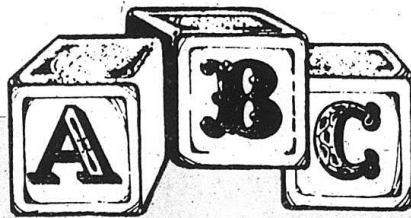
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