

# Third ID, Families remember their Fallen

Egt. Uriah Walker | 3rd ID Public Affairs

Photo by Sgt. Jared S. Eastman, 1HBCT Public Affairs

Colonel Jim Crider, 1HBCT commander, places a wreath at Maj. Sid Brookshire's tree during Wreaths for Warriors Walk, Dec. 10.

Each December since 2007, there has been a wreath laying ceremony at Fort Stewart's Warriors Walk.

During the ceremony, Family Members, friends and comrades of Fallen Third Infantry Division Soldiers gather to remember those that will not be here for the holidays.

This year's ceremony was held Dec. 10 with the imminent threat of rain in the sky, but warmth in the hearts of the more than 300 Soldiers, Family Members and friends who came to pay homage to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

As has been done in the past, a wreath was placed at the base of each of the 439 Eastern Redbud trees. Each tree is a living memorial dedicated to the memory of a 3rd Inf. Div. Soldier who lost their life while serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom.

"There are 104 confirmed Family Members here this year," said Bruce Muncher, Wreaths for Warriors Walk co-founder. "We wanted something, as a whole, to bring as many Family Members as we could back and say, 'Your loved ones aren't forgotten.'"

In the absence of a Family Member, a wreath was placed instead, by one of several supporters from the community, whether it was a member of the local chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America, a JROTC Cadet, or a Soldier currently assigned to 3rd Inf. Div.

Walking among the Eastern Redbud trees on

the chilly, overcast Saturday afternoon, there were wreaths being laid, trees being decorated, smiles, tears, and salutes to lost comrades-in-arms.

Fallen Soldier, Staff Sgt. William J. Brooks, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Inf. Div. who was killed in Iraq in 2005, was attended by a friend, for which this was the first ceremony he had attended. The friend talked about how he and Brooks had attended Advanced Individual Training together and how much he had learned from him.

The Family of Sergeant Peter Neesley, who was assigned to the 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Combat Team, 3rd Inf. Div., when he died in Baghdad on Christmas Day 2007, made the trip from Michigan to lay a wreath and decorate his tree. His sister, mother and nephew each brought with them a personal item to place either on, or at the foot of his tree.

Through all of the tears and memories of the day, there were still smiles, a few laughs, and a lot of hugs as Family and friends who share a common loss came together to remember the Soldiers of the 3rd Inf. Div. who gave their lives fighting against the ongoing war on terror.

"Tomorrow's not promised, so don't waste another minute," said Colonel Roger L. Cloutier, deputy commanding general - maneuver Third Infantry Division.



Photo by Sgt. Mary S. Katzenberger, 4IBCT Public Affairs

LEFT: Two men embrace, Dec. 10, during the Wreaths for Warriors Walk Wreath Ceremony in Honor of the Fallen Heroes of the 3rd Inf. Div. at Cottrell Field.



Photo by Sgt. Luke Rollins, 3rd CAB Public Affairs

LEFT: Rebekka Hawkins and Aaron Jacobs share a private moment during the Fifth Annual Wreaths for Warriors Walk, Dec. 10, at Cottrell Field.



Photo by Sgt. Mary Kaztenberger, 4IBCT Public Affairs

BELOW: John Platt, a retired Army officer, kneels, Dec. 10, before the Eastern Redbud tree planted in memory of Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith during the Wreaths for Warriors Walk Wreath Ceremony in Honor of the Fallen Heroes of the 3rd Infantry Division at Cottrell Field. Platt said he served with Smith, who was Operation Iraqi Freedom's first Medal of Honor Recipient, twice during his career.



Photo by Sgt. Luke Rollins, 3rd CAB Public Affairs

Lyrean Lamie, daughter of Sgt. Gene Lamie, stands at her father's memorial tree during the Fifth Annual Wreaths for Warriors Walk, Dec. 10 at Cottrell Field. Sergeant Lamie was assigned to the 3rd Bn., 7th Cavalry Regt. when he lost his life during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2007.

