Colby Free PressWednesday, May 30, 2007

Fort Riley marks Memorial Day as Iraq death toll rises

FORT RILEY (AP) — Rain fell softly Monday as hundreds from this military community gathered at

the post cemetery to honor the sacrifices of soldiers throughout the nation's history. As the death toll of Fort Riley soldiers fighting in Iraq hit 102, com-



manding general said the aggregate total pales in comparison to the pain felt by those who knew and loved the soldiers.

"The numbers don't mean anything," said Maj. Gen. Carter Ham. "The only number that means anything is one — that's one family."

The Fort Riley cemetery is the final resting place for soldiers dating to its days as a frontier outpost through the current conflict. An American flag waved by the hundreds of graves and flowers dotted the landscape. The count reached 102 Monday with announcement of the deaths of Sgt. 1st Class Robert E. Dunham, 36, of Baltimore, and Staff Sgt. Russell K. Shoemaker, 31, of Sweet Springs, Mo. They were members of a transition team working with the Iraqi army, assigned to the 1st Infantry Division's 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Dunham and Shoemaker were killed Thursday when their vehicle struck a roadside bomb in Baghdad. Dunham had been in the Army since 1988; Shoemaker an Army Reservist since 1995, mobilized for active duty in Iraq. Fort Riley has 6,000 soldiers fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. "I'd be kidding you if I said it didn't hurt. Every one of them hurts," said Ham.

Ham said the best way to honor those who have died is to "see the mission to successful completion." Despite increasing public and political opposition to the war, Ham said soldiers know they are sup-

We're indebted to their lives and families. The burden falls on a small number of Americans to serve."

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius

discuss about the right thing to do. That's how our country operates. This is our process. It's OK that there is debate."

Later this week, a memorial service will be held for Sauceda, the first of four recent Fort Riley casualties from Iraq. Like those who fell before him, his name will echo off the vaulted ceiling of Morris Hill Chapel as the sergeant calls his name one last time. The service will include a volley of gunfire in salute and the playing of "Taps."

Col. Thomas Day, Fort Riley's chaplain, said every memorial service is rehearsed multiple times to make sure it's done right.

"I think in some ways each (death) gets harder."

At a Memorial Day ceremony at the Statehouse, Cindy Butler placed a rose beneath the state's official wreath in honor of her son, Sgt. Jacob Butler, the first Kansan and first Fort Riley soldier killed in Iraq. She was joined by Joe, Jacob's twin brother. The entire family wore Tshirts, as they do each Memorial Day, emblazoned with Jacob's photo and the American flag.

Jacob's name and that of the nearly 150 Kansans or Kansasbased soldiers killed in Afghanistan or Iraq was read aloud.

"We're indebted to their lives and families," said Gov. Kathleen Sebelius. "The burden falls on a small number of Americans to serve." Jim Butler smiled thinking about his son, his values and his desire to serve his country. He said he thinks of "Jake" every day, dedi-"The nation has matured since cating one wall and the better part Vietnam," he said. "It's normal to of a second to his memory.

Fallen soldiers remembered

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vehicle in Baghdad.

Sgt. 1st Class Dexter E. Wheelous, 37, Winder, Ga. 842nd Military Transition Team, 1st Bri-Dec. 25 in a bomb attack while on a combat mission in Baghdad.

— Capt. Hayes N. Clayton Jr., 29, Fort Valley, Ga. 842nd Military Transition Team, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed Dec. 25 in a bomb attack while on a combat mission in Baghdad.

2007:

- Sgt. Gregory A. Wright, 28, Boston. 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed Jan. 13 when a roadside bomb exploded while on a combat mission in Muqdadiyah.

— Sgt. Jonathan P. Kingman, 21, Nankin, Ohio. 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed Jan. 20 when a roadside bomb exploded near his vehicle near Baji.

 Sgt. 1st Class John S.. Stephens, 41, La Grande, Colo. 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed March 15 when his vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb in Tikrit.

 Sgt. Wayne R. Cornell, 26, Holstein, Neb. 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed March 20 when a roadside bomb struck his vehicle in Baghdad.

 Pfc. Stephen K. Richardson, 22, Bridgeport, Conn. 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed March 20 when a roadside bomb struck his vehicle in Baghdad.

— Sgt. Curtis E. Glawson Jr., 24, Daleville, Ala. 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed March 20 when a roadside bomb struck his vehicle in Baghdad.

— Spc. Brian Ritzberg, 24, Long Island, N.Y. 977th Military Police Company, 1st Infantry Division. Killed April 2 when a vehicle-borne bomb exploded in Kirkuk.

 Pfc. Daniel A. Fuentes, 19, Levittown, N.Y. 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry roadside bomb exploded near his can supply a complete list if wanted.

vehicle in Baghdad.

Pfc. Jay S. Cajimat, 20, La-Fort Riley. Killed Nov. 30 when a haina, Hawaii. 2nd Battalion, 16th roadside bomb exploded near his Infantry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed April 6 when a roadside bomb exploded near his vehicle in Baghdad.

 Pfc. Steven J. Walberg, 18, gade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed Paradise, Calif. 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed April 15 when he was hit by small-arms fire in Bagh-

- Pfc. Aaron M. Genevie, 22, Chambersburg, Pa. 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed April 15 when a roadside bomb struck his vehicle in Baghdad.

Pfc. Jason Morales, 20, La Puente, Calif. 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed April 18 when he came under small-arms fire attack on foot patrol in Baghdad.

- Pfc. Christopher M. North, 21, Sarasota, Fla. 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed April 21 when his patrol came under attack from explosives and small-arms fire.

1st Lt. Ryan P. Jones, 23, Westminister, Mass. Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed May 2 when his vehicle struck a roadside bomb in Baghdad.

- Spc. Astor A. Sunsin-Pineda, 20, Long Beach, Calif. Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed May 2 when his vehicle struck a roadside bomb in Baghdad.

Spc. Robert J. Dixon, 27, Minneapolis, Minn. 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed May 6 when his vehicle struck a roadside bomb in

Pvt. Oscar Sauceda Jr., 21, Del Rio, Texas. 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed May 22 by smallarms fire in Bagdhad. Spc. Benjamin Ashley, 22,

Independence, Mo. 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Killed May 24 in Balad when the vehicle he was driving struck a roadside bomb.

Editor's note: Due to the length of the preceding article, we were Division. Killed April 6 when a unable to include all names, but we



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

Honoring our veterans

Officers and honor guard members of Grinnell's Veterans of Foreign Wars Post made their way past flags flying at the Hoxie Cemetery during a ceremony Monday and just prior to one of several services they conducted in Sheridan and Gove county as part of Memorial Day celebrations honoring fellow veterans who have given their lives defending America.