

[Advertise with us!](#)[Subscribe today!](#)[Subscription Services](#)[E-Edition](#)[Text Alerts](#)[Contact Us](#)[About Us](#)[Help](#)[Home](#) [Blogs](#) [News](#) [Business](#) [Columnists](#) [Life](#) [Military](#) [Obituaries](#) [Opinion](#) [Sports](#)[Yellow Pages](#) [Homes](#) [Autos](#) [Jobs](#) [Classifieds](#)

Originally published on Sunday, May 24, 2009 in the *Local & State* category.

## Field of Honor Many stories, one nation

By Jennifer Calhoun

*Staff writer*

About 1,400 flags line the front grounds of the Airborne & Special Operations Museum downtown, and each one tells a story.

They are stories of victory and loss, death and survival, war and peace.

The flags make up the city's Field of Honor, which recognizes the contributions of the country's service men and women.

The display has attracted scores of visitors since the flags were erected earlier this month. These are the stories of some of the people who stopped by one day last week.

Rita Wright's eyes are red, and her cheeks are wet. She stands, unflinching, in a field of rippling flags.

"How beautiful," she says, looking around and seeing more than the dramatic sight of hundreds of uniform American flags. "This is for me to have my cup of coffee and freedom."

Wright's accent is German, but she is fiercely American.

She has just visited a flag she sponsored for a friend, Allen Gifford. He was 40 or 41 when he died as a soldier in Iraq two years ago, she says.

Her voice catches.

"I couldn't talk when I saw his name," she says. "I just cried. I knew him since he was a baby when we lived in Germany. His mother was Czechoslovakian. She was a friend of ours."

Wright puts her hand at her knee, her palm flat, signifying the height of a toddler.

"I knew him since he was little," she says. "I used to change his diaper."

A tag on one flag reads: "Honoring Chief Warrant Officer 3 Raymond Frost, Korea, Vietnam — We miss you Uncle."

Lt. Col. John Frye and his wife, Lisa, stand in front of the flags, watching them flap in the breeze.

Frye, who is stationed at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, has been at Fort Bragg for the past two months for a civil affairs course. He leaves for his first combat deployment to Iraq in less than a month.

Lisa, who is visiting him, says the couple plan to go on a honeymoon in South Carolina. It will be their first, despite being married for 26 years, she says.

Frye saw the flags for the first time while driving through the city recently.

"I love it," he says. "I've never seen anything like this. I knew I had to show my wife."

Lisa Frye stares into the flags, smiling.

"This touches the heart," she says. "It's just pure American pride."

A 3-year-old named Faith Mooneyham skips through the rows of flags, batting at them as they flutter above her.

Like other children who see the field, Faith is wide-eyed and ready to play among the rows of red, white and blue.

Another child, Carter Smith, giggles and screams as the flags whip in the air, animated by the wind.

"He thinks it's funny when they blow in our faces," says his mother, Jennifer Smith.

Sgt. 1st Class Jason Keller steps through the rows, inspecting the little yellow tags for names.

The likelihood he'll know someone is slim, but he reaches for the tags anyway.

The names and the wars listed on the tags personalize the memorial, but the field brings together the generations of those who have served.

"When you see it, it kind of brings into perspective what we do," says Keller, who is preparing for a deployment to Iraq.

“Looking at these tags, some of the people are from the past, and some are right now. But they’re all in the same place. They’re all together here.”

Staff writer Jennifer Calhoun can be reached at [calhounj@fayobserver.com](mailto:calhounj@fayobserver.com) or 486-3595. Staff photo by Raul R. Rubiera Staff photo by Ashley Cross Staff photo by Raul R. Rubiera

Fort Bragg Life | Pope Life |  
910Crime | 910Moms |  
910Pets | 910Street | ACC  
Court Vision | FayObserver  
TalkBack

Keep up to date with all the news! Try our [TxtAlerts](#) and [Fayobserver.com mobile edition](#).

To subscribe to The Fayetteville Observer, [click here](#).

FayObserver.com: Home |

Blogs | News | Business | Columns | Life | Military | Obituaries | Opinion | Sports  
Weekly Features: Weekender | Saturday Extra | Faith | Celebrations | Parade | E-Edition

Copyright 2009 - The Fayetteville Observer | [About us](#) | [Subscribe now](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Text Alerts](#) | [Help](#) | [Site Map](#)

**Best reads. Fine arts.**  
SundayLife available only with your home-delivery subscription.

**Don't miss an issue. Subscribe today!**