

## Glory Days: Tributes to veterans exhibit Fayetteville's patriotism



Staff photo by Johnny Horne

The Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry posts the colors during the Memorial Day service at Freedom Memorial Park in downtown Fayetteville on Monday.

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Staff writer

A single tear streamed down Terry Bonderman's cheek as taps sounded through the humid morning air along Bragg Boulevard on Monday.

Bonderman was surrounded by a few hundred others who came out to Freedom Memorial Park to honor America's fallen soldiers.

The crowd was speckled with red, white and blue, and appeared to include veterans of all generations.

Bonderman, a 64-year-old Vietnam War veteran, wiped any sign of emotion

from his face before turning to hug his wife at the close of the Memorial Day service.

"This is a special city," Bonderman said. "I've lived all over the country, and no city honors its veterans like Fayetteville."

Lt. Gen. John F. Mulholland, commander of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, delivered the ceremony's keynote address.

Mulholland thanked the crowd for taking time out "on a day most Americans still see as just another day off" to pay tribute to the nation's war heroes.

The general said he was most impressed by the number of children in the crowd.

"It starts with conveying that sense of love and duty and commitment to the greatest country that ever existed," Mulholland said. "If we don't continue to transmit that sense to our children, this will be a very different place."

The ceremony included the laying of wreaths at each of the park's memorials and the rendering of honors by a Pope Air Force Base firing squad.

David Hamel of the state Veterans of Foreign Wars performed a tribute to war prisoners and missing soldiers.

Misty Parker was feeling exceptionally patriotic after the ceremony.

Parker and her family planned to spend the rest of the day enjoying Glory Days - the city's downtown Memorial Day celebration, complete with a classic car show, live music, a charity bike race and carnival-style street vendors.

"So now when we take a bite out of that corn dog later today," Parker said, "I'm going to remind my kids that people died so you can enjoy that. That's what this day is all about."

Minutes after the ceremony, Alice Sandborn sat on the grass outside the Airborne & Special Operations Museum.

The retired teacher watched as more than 1,100 American flags danced with the wind in the nearby Field of Honor - a tribute organized by the Downtown Alliance.

Each of the flags was sponsored in honor of a veteran or military unit. Children ran and played while families strolled through the grassy field reading names attached to the flags.

Sandborn smiled at the sound of two young girls laughing.

"This is beautiful," Sandborn said, looking out over the field of red, white and blue. "What better way to honor men and women who died for our freedom than by slowing down for a day and enjoying all God's blessings."

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