

Sunburst FORWARD



'Henkes Lane' rededicated in Mosul

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE MAREZ,

Iraq – A handful of Soldiers from the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and the 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, gathered March 21 on top of a hill overlooking the city of Mosul, Iraq, to rededicate a street on Contingency Operating Base Marez in honor of one of their fallen comrades.

Service members often refer to each other as brothers-in-arms, but for one Soldier attending the quiet, informal ceremony, it was not just a figure of speech.

Maj. Linda Bass, the human resources chief for the 13th ESC and a Bessemer, Ala., native, was there to pay tribute to her brother, Sgt. 1st Class Richard Henkes. He died of wounds received during combat operations in Mosul in September 2006, when his Stryker vehicle struck an improvised explosive device.

When Bass first arrived in Iraq roughly a year ago, she visited Mosul and saw the street signs. When she left on leave, she was able to take one sign home to their father in Silverton,



Soldiers from the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and the 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, pose next to street sign dedicated to Sgt. 1st Class Richard Henkes, who was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, during the unit's deployment to Mosul, Iraq, in 2006. Henkes died from wounds received during combat operations in Mosul in September 2006, when his Stryker vehicle struck an improvised explosive device.

Ore., who put it up on a tree next to the lane leading to the family home.

"I tried to keep it in the condition it was in when I got it, weatherworn and dusty," she said. "It had a huge impact on him."

While she took one sign with her, she left something of her own behind: a small shield she wore on her dog-tags, with an inscription from Joshua 1:9 on the back. Henkes gave Bass the shield at her wedding rehearsal dinner. The verse reads: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for

the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

She left it at the base of one of the street signs, and an interesting thing happened, said Bass. Before she left Mosul, COL Marez's mayor visited her and handed the shield back, thinking that a Soldier may have left it there in memory of her brother.

"I said to him, 'No, I left this there today,' and he said, 'That's so strange, I wear the same thing on my dog-tags,'" said Bass.

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Memorial (continued)

At the rededication ceremony, Soldiers who served with Henkes in 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Bde., 2nd Inf. Div., were in attendance.

Command Sgt. Maj. Alan Bjerke, who was then 2nd Battalion's senior enlisted adviser, now the 3rd Stryker Bde., 2nd Inf. Div.'s senior enlisted adviser, spoke briefly.

"Our heroes that have made the ultimate sacrifice have made a difference," said Bjerke, a Devil's Lake, N.D., native. "By placing a sign, memorializing a street or a (dining facility), this is one of the ways we remember them."

Bass also said a few words during the ceremony, and shared stories about her younger brother. She spoke of Henke's actions the day before he died.

"They were stopped and clearing an area after an IED went off, when

Rich (Henkes) noticed a family with a wounded boy," she said.

As the medic worked on the boy, Henkes comforted the family.

"He was an infantryman, but he was a peacemaker," she said. "If he could help one person, that was enough."

Henkes' legacy lives on in his troops and his daughter Isabel, said Bass. After his death, Soldiers in his platoon pooled their money to allow Henkes' family to take Isabel to Disneyland.

"He always talked about his daughter and how he wanted to take her to Disneyland," said Sgt. Rick Martin, an infantryman with 2nd Bn., 3rd Inf. Regt., who served with Henkes in 2006.

"That was his main focus, so it was our gift to him," said Martin, a South Padre Island, Texas, native.

For his sister, who said she could

never truly recover from the loss, his legacy serves as a reminder of him everyday.

"I remember a lot of things about him," said Bass. "I hope nobody forgets him, or all the others that have fallen."

In light of the memorial, Bass said she began to notice other memorials.

"I became very aware of the memorials," she said. "It would be nice to collect these signs, memorials, for the families."

Bass said she reached out to her congressmen, senators and whoever else she could.

"I want this to grow into an effort to bring the memorials home," she said. "I hope this rededication will act as a launching pad for a larger effort."

What do like most about the deployment?



Sgt. 1st Class Johnnie Mitchell, equal opportunity NCO, 13th ESC, Sylvania, Ga., native.

"The living accommodations are better now than before."



Master Sgt. Michael Bair, command chaplain NCOIC, 13th ESC, Fredericksburg, Va., native.

"The opportunity to interact with the Air Force and learn."



Master Sgt. Willie Charles, integration NCOIC, 13th ESC, Harker Heights, Texas, native.

"I enjoy all the MWR runs, they really boost morale."

Photos from Iraq



Get to know your 13th ESC Soldier: HHC commander

Capt. L. Pilar Restrepo: Born in Medellin, Colombia, the current commander of headquarters and headquarters company, 13th ESC, moved to Fort Rucker, Ala., in June 1994. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of the North in Colombia, Restrepo said she was looking for a job, but her limited English language skills precluded her from many positions.

"I thought the Army would help me learn English and gain skills I could use," said Restrepo.

She enlisted in the Army in August 1996 in the Adjutant General Corps, and served four years at Fort Rucker, Ala., assigned to the 210th Aviation Regiment.

In November 2000, after becoming an American citizen, Restrepo was commissioned as a U.S. Army Transportation officer. Though she is now a logistics officer, she still looks fondly back at her transportation roots.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, Restrepo deployed for the first time to Kuwait with the 49th Transportation Battalion.

Nine years later, and now on her fifth deployment, Restrepo says she is proud of her military career.

"My deployment to Taji with the 1st Cavalry Division as a company commander, was the most enjoyable because of the mission and the Soldiers," said Restrepo.

Three years ago, Restrepo married Lt. Col. Rich Lee, the 13th ESC chief of operations, in a civil ceremony in Austin, Texas.

"We got married on R and R," said Restrepo. "I was deployed to Taji, and he was deployed to Balad, and we went home for R and R at the same time."

Restrepo offers advice for military families.

"Accept the person you married for who he or she is, don't try to change them. The sooner you can do that, the happier you will be."

As an experienced company commander, Restrepo says she enjoys leading troops and making a difference in their lives for the better.

"Making a change and making it better than it was when you got here, that's the ultimate goal."



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