



PHOTOS BY ANDY DIFFENDERFER

David Montgomery, of Tunnel Hill, Ga., right, shares a moment with George Patton Waters, left, grandson of Gen. George S. Patton, and Patton portrayer Denny Hair.

Reliving history

Fort Oglethorpe event recalls heroes of war

BY ANDY DIFFENDERFER
CORRESPONDENT

The Barnhardt Circle polo field in Fort Oglethorpe became an outdoor classroom Saturday as a "Remembering Our Heroes" exhibition featured two World War II battle reproductions and many military displays and demonstrations for visitors.

The re-enactments, complete with authentic vehicles, equipment, weapons, mock firings and Allied and Axis fighters, highlighted the military history of the Army post at Fort Oglethorpe.

George Patton Waters, grandson of Gen. George Patton, appeared at the day's events and was scheduled to speak Saturday night at a dinner and auction at The Colonnade in Ringgold, Ga.

Also attending was Patton portrayer Denny Hair and the Third Army Living Historians from Texas, among the many units which attended. Living historians from all time periods were welcomed to the event, and were peppered with questions from curious visitors.

The day's turnout surpassed the expectations of

Chris McKeever, executive director of the Sixth Cavalry Museum in Fort Oglethorpe. Event proceeds benefit the museum.

She said she hoped to have about 20 or 30 re-enactors and about five or six military vehicles for the event; instead, the exhibition attracted about 60 to 70 re-enactors and about 30 vehicles from as far away as Texas, Florida and Kentucky. The Scenic City Chorus also performed a patriotic concert.

"We're just very happy to have this huge turnout with a great variety of re-enactors," she said. "The

quality of the re-enactors has been outstanding. To have this kind of a collection on a single field, we are very excited."

The "crowd is really informed," re-enactor Tom Retseck, of Soddy-Daisy, said between battles. "I think it's a great event, and people really have an interest."

Hair, a retired police officer from Houston, said he's seeing "an awakening" among the public.

"What we are seeing [is] people paying more attention to our veterans today

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and seeing how special they really are," he said.

Hair has portrayed Patton since 1984 in movies, plays, musicals and re-enactments and at active duty military bases, veteran reunions, parades and museums. His rousing portrayal of the famed military leader Saturday got the crowd revved up for the two battles.

Hair noted the many children among the crowds Saturday and said the exhibition was an excellent learning opportunity for them.

"Whatever we have today, and what we must teach our children, is that freedom comes with a price," he said. "Take the time to teach what American heroes are all about. Every single time a soldier comes home from Iraq or Afghanistan, he or



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Re-enactor Joe Winder, of Athens, Tenn., right, assists paratrooper Winston Rutherford, of Seymour, Tenn., at the "Remembering Our Heroes" exhibition in Fort Oglethorpe.

she is a hero."

Waters was 5 when his grandfather died Dec. 21, 1945, from injuries suffered in a vehicle crash earlier that month in Germany. Waters, 69, lives in Mount Pleasant, S.C., and spent five years in the Navy.

"This is heartwarming and this is what America is all about," he said. "What an honor to the military. Look at the people who are out here, and the young kids."

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