

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY
 AT VANCOUVER BARRACKS
 INCLUDES TRIBUTE TO SOLDIER
 KILLED LAST YEAR IN AFGHANISTAN



SALUTING THE FALLEN



Photos by STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Sgt. Scott Freitas, left, and Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt, right, escort Victoria Walz, mother of Pfc. Christopher Ian Walz, on Monday as she places a wreath for her son at Vancouver's Memorial Day ceremony. Top: Walz is the most recent name added to the Clark County War Memorial at Vancouver Barracks.

By STEPHANIE RICE
 Columbian staff writer

A few elderly men gingerly rose from folding chairs when Bob Knight, president of Clark College and a featured speaker at Monday's ceremony at the Clark County War Memorial, called upon veterans of World War II to stand.

A few more men stood up as veterans of the Korean War; Vietnam War veterans numbered even more. Then a handful of Gulf War veterans were met with applause.

Knight, former commander of Vancouver Barracks, surveyed the crowd of several hundred at the barracks and

said he wished more people were there to honor the veterans. He knows some people view Memorial Day as simply a day off from work or school, a day to check out sales at the mall, gather with friends for barbecues and watch sports on TV.

On Page A2

■ Ceremonies in U.S., Iraq, Afghanistan honor America's service members.

Maybe the threat of rain kept people away, he said.

But soldiers "fought in much worse weather than this," Knight said.

"For those of us who are here today, this is the least we could do for them," he said.

The war memorial features nearly 600

names of soldiers with a Clark County connection — those either born here or who were legal residents at their time of death, although exceptions have been made — who have died in combat since the Spanish American War.

Twelve of the names are listed under "Global War on Terrorism."

Knight read off each of those 12 names, followed by a "thank you."

The last name he read was Pfc. Christopher Ian Walz.

Vancouver Councilman Larry Smith told the crowd Walz was killed Oct. 27 in Afghanistan by a roadside bomb. Smith said Walz was killed with six other

Memorial Day:

From Page A1

soldiers, his "band of brothers." Their unit, 5th Stryker Brigade Combat Team of the 2nd Infantry Division, based at Fort Lewis, is due to rotate home in the next few months.

Smith explained that two wreaths were going to be placed in front of the memorial. One was in remembrance of all of the fallen soldiers, and the second was to honor Walz, a 2002 graduate of Hudson's Bay High School.

As the Vancouver Community Concert Band played "America the Beautiful," Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt and Knight took the first wreath and were joined by Walz's mother, Victoria Walz, as they placed it in



STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

World War II veteran Richard Mathews, center, talks with former Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard on Monday at the Memorial Day ceremony at Vancouver Barracks.

front of the memorial.

Then Sgt. Scott Freitas, who escorted Walz at her son's memorial service, replaced Knight, and walked with Walz

and Leavitt to set down the second wreath.

Walz returned to her seat in the front row, next to other Gold Star Mothers who have lost their

children in military service.

The rain didn't fall during the hourlong ceremony, and the skies brightened noticeably a few times, including when Walz, Leavitt and Knight walked forward with the first wreath.

When asked afterward how she felt during the wreath ceremony, Walz said that was a difficult question to answer.

The emotions are always changing, she said.

As she walked arm in arm with Freitas and Leavitt, she was a grim reminder of the price the country has paid for the freedoms the speakers on Monday took special care to mention.

Free will, free speech, freedom of religion.

"Yes, we are a mighty nation," Leavitt said during his speech. "But not without significant cost."