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Students study school's namesake

Morrie McBride went to West Point, died in Vietnam

BY MICK WALSH
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Sure, sure it's Election Day across America.

But for the faculty and students at one Fort Benning school, it's "Curious About Morrie Day" — a time set aside to learn more about the school's namesake, Capt. Morris Ralph McBride.

Or, as his former West Point roommate Jerry Scott said, "We all just called him Morrie."

The school will conduct a rededication ceremony Nov. 17 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the school's opening. While that was in its planning stages, teachers and faculty decided to add an additional celebratory day.

"I think it's important for us, the children and the staff, to reflect on Morrie McBride himself and to learn all there is to know about this very interesting man," said principal Phyllis Parker.

Few knew him better than Scott, a retired Army colonel who lives in Columbus.

It was Chicago product McBride who tipped off Oklahoman Scott to the world of jazz.

"We'd go to New York on the weekends to hear all the jazz birds, folks like Dizzy Gillespie and Ella Fitzgerald," said Scott, who arrived at West Point July 5, 1953, and was assigned a room with McBride.

Scott had played football for a year at the University of



McBride

Tulsa before being accepted to the U.S. Military Academy — and he played during his plebe season at West Point. His roomie had played football in high school, but his first passion was music.

"He and his guitar went everywhere together," Scott said. "In fact, if he was alive today, he'd be a tall, thin, balding fella with a guitar over his shoulder, probably playing some kind of folk music."

While Scott went on to a full Army career, McBride, who was an usher at Scott's wedding one day after graduation in 1957, became one of the first soldiers from their graduating class to be killed in Vietnam. His actions during an enemy machine gun and mortar attack resulted in the posthumous awarding of the nation's second highest decoration, the Distinguished Service Cross.

"I was in Korea when I heard the news of Morrie's death," said Scott, who later served in Vietnam. "He was one hell of a guy."

McBride, who left a wife and two daughters, was buried March 14, 1964, in the Main Post Cemetery on Fort Benning. Two years later, the post's newest elementary school was named in his honor.

It wasn't long ago that Scott accompanied retired Lt. Gen. Hank "Gunfighter" Emerson on a visit to McBride Elementary.

"Hank was our tac (tactical officer) at West Point, and he almost broke down and cried during our visit," Scott said. "That's how much he thought of Morrie."

Today's schedule at McBride begins with a full school assembly, followed by breakout sessions, many of them focusing on Vietnam.