

20th SOS remembers fallen wingmen

by Amy Oliver
1st SOW Public Affairs

4/8/2008 - HURLBURT FIELD, Fla. -- Three fallen 20th Special Operations Squadron Air Commandos were honored March 25 when Hurlburt Field officials renamed three streets in their honor.

Family members, friends and comrades of Master Sgt. William "Scooter" Kerwood, Tech. Sgt. Howard "Howie" Walters and Staff Sgt. Thomas "Tom" Walkup Jr., packed the 20th SOS auditorium during a ceremony where the new street signs were unveiled.

Sergeants Kerwood, Walters and Walkup died Nov. 23, 2003, when their MH-53 PAVE LOW helicopter crashed about five minutes after it lifted off during a mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"They paid the ultimate price for freedom," said Lt. Col. Vincent Becklund, 20th SOS commander. "That's why we're here today ... to honor, respect and remember our fallen heroes."

Two other crew members, Maj. Steven Plumhoff from Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M., and Army Sgt. Maj. Phillip Albert from Fort Drum, N. Y., also died in the crash. Eight other crew members survived.

"Tom always made sure that wherever he went, his friends came first. He would never abandon a friend or brother in need and could always bring you up when you felt down. He was funny, animated, honest and courageous," wrote Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Porter, who is currently deployed, in a letter about Sergeant Walkup, which was read by Colonel Becklund. "He loved his family, he loved life, and he loved the PAVE LOW."

Tech. Sgt. Corey Fossbender, 20th SOS, also shared memories of his friends, Sergeants Kerwood and Walters.

"I first met Howie and Scooter about 13 years ago going through the schoolhouse and through numerous assignments," Sergeant Fossbender said. "The reason I remained friends with them was because of the way they inspired me. They were loyal, they had personal integrity, and they always got the job done."

All three renamed streets are located on the East side of the base. Golf Course Road will become Walkup Way. Loop Road, which runs behind the commissary, will become Howie Walters Road. East Road, which turns south off Loop Road, will become Kerwood Road.

"I think it's important that we not remember how they died, but the way they lived, and the way we can all live from here on out so we can continue this mission," Sergeant Fossbender said.



Tech. Sgt. Andy Reed, a former member of the 20th Special Operations Squadron, assists Kara Kerwood with the unveiling of a street sign named in her husband's honor during a ceremony at the 20th SOS March 25. (U.S. Air Force photo/ Senior Airman Stephanie Jacobs)