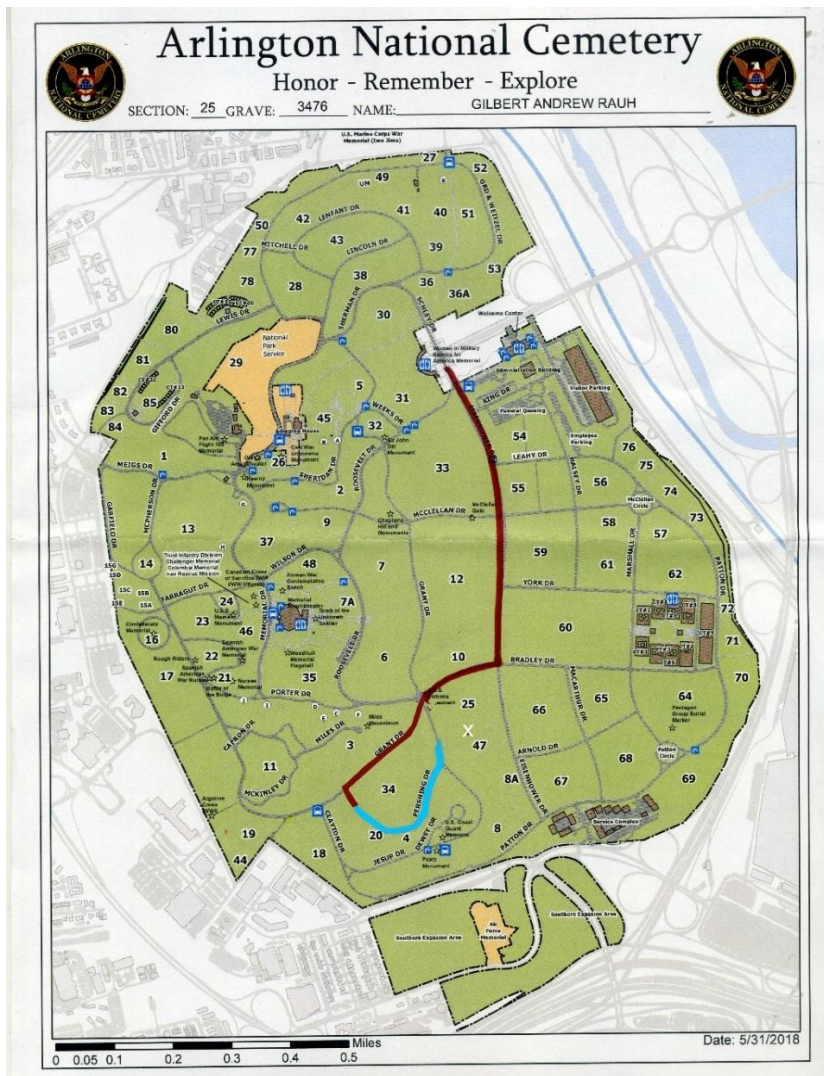


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CHAPTER 16

14 JULY 2025 – ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

We met at the Arlington National Cemetery Administration Building at 11:00 AM. Our Casualty Assistance Officer, Rachel Jones, and two Pentagon representatives joined us, Dr. Sandra Heredia, Assistant Deputy, Casualty and Mortuary Affairs - Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) and COL Antionette Rainey—Assistant Deputy, Military Personnel Policy; ASA(M&RA). We had a brief meeting with the memorial service coordinator who described what would take place during the service, followed by a very pleasant conversation with Chaplain Shannon Demoret who would deliver the eulogy and prayers that day.



The plan was to leave the Administration Building in a caravan of cars, driving south on Eisenhower Drive, turning right on Grant Drive and assembling at Section 20 on Pershing Drive. From there we would follow the procession one-quarter mile to the grave site in Section 25.

I had seen bits and pieces of similar ceremonies in movies and on newscasts so I had some idea what to expect. Arlington had begun using horse drawn caissons again only recently but the very hot days put that activity in jeopardy. I expected pall bearers, a Colors Honor Guard, riflemen for the twenty-one gun salute and a few Army Band instruments including fief and drums for marching and a bugler.

When we pulled in behind the caisson, the scene was magnificent and stunning, way beyond my expectations.

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The scene was frozen in time, even all six massive black Percherons¹⁷ and a seventh mounted rider did not move.



¹⁷ Percherons are known for their large size, calm temperament, and solid strength — all ideal traits for ceremonial duties like pulling caissons or carrying riders in formal processions.

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Off to my left among the grave markers stood the four-man Color Guard, a platoon of eighteen riflemen and their platoon leader and a full eighteen-piece Army Marching Band and their leader.



Every button, every medal, every buckle, every shoe, ceremonial swords and musical instruments were polished to perfection and gleaming in the sunlight. There were white gloves everywhere.

Counting the Chaplain, Pentagon representatives and a half-dozen others in uniform policing the area to make things perfect, there were almost seventy uniformed personnel in attendance showing immense respect and obvious pride in the honors they were bestowing. Each behaved as if the remains in the casket were those of their own father, brother, son or cousin. It was their loss too and they intended to show utmost respect.



'Present Arms' ordered everyone to attention. The pall bearers moved in slow synchronous motion as the band played softly, placing 2LT Gilbert A. Rauh's remains on the caisson. The Hymn, *Jerusalem the Golden*, complemented the absolute silence and serenity of the moment.

'Present Arms' was ordered yet again and in perfect synchrony, the seventy white gloves of the procession were raised to salute. The enormity of the moment made it difficult to control one's emotions.

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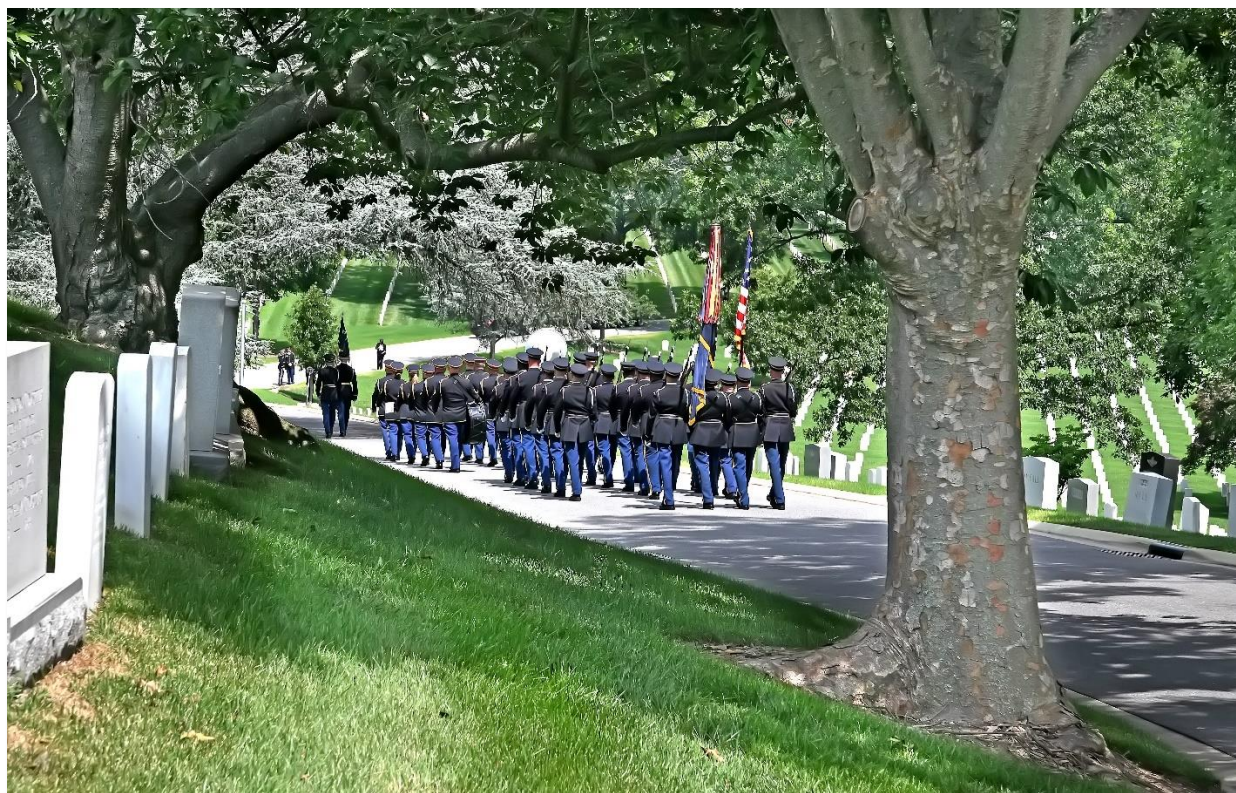
The drummers set the cadence of the dirge, and the marching began in perfect step. The procession to the grave site one-quarter mile away had begun. The Band entered Pershing Drive followed by the platoon of riflemen, the Color Guard, Chaplain, caisson family and friends.



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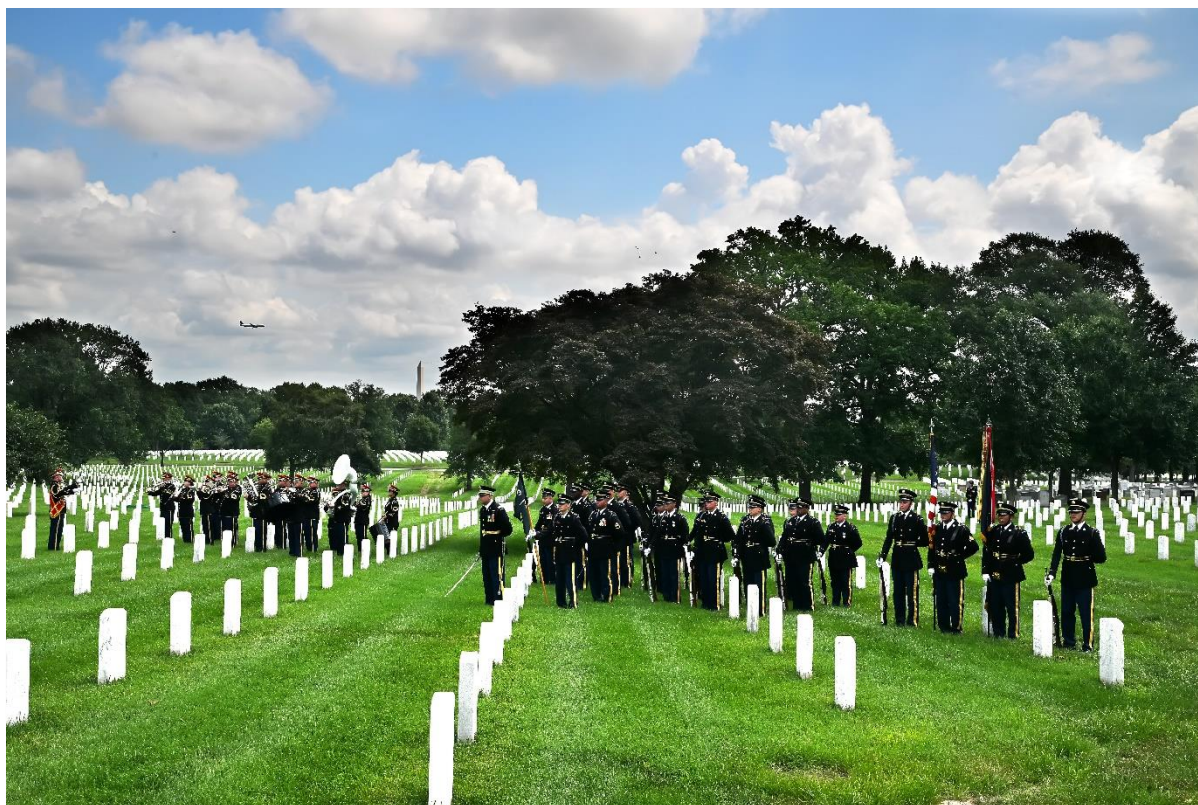


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As the Band and riflemen platoon assembled in Section 25, the caisson arrived.



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Once again in slow motion, pall bearers retrieved 2nd LT Gilbert A. Rauh's remains and flag from the casket. There was another measured salute.

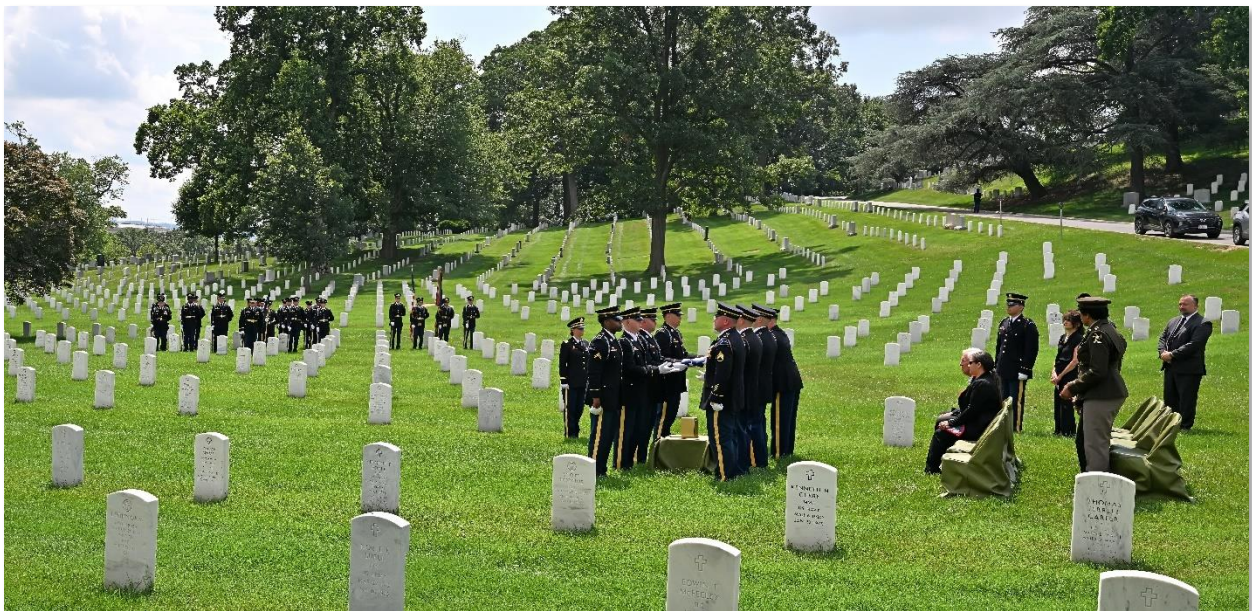


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Family entered the grave site area and the service began.



St. Anne's Hymn, *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*, echoed in the background as the tri-folded flag was unfurled. It would remain stretched tautly and unmoving at attention over Gibby, for the next twenty minutes.



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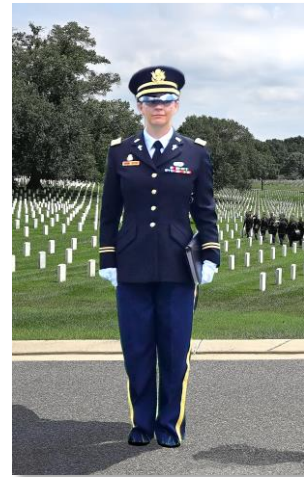
Chaplain, Captain Shannon Demoret, stepped forward facing family and friends. She spoke with eloquence, passion and resolve -



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Ladies and gentlemen, I am Chaplain Shannon Demoret, and it is my honor to minister to you today as we lay to rest your beloved and our comrade in arms, Second Lieutenant Gilbert Andrew Rauh.

Welcome to Arlington National Cemetery, where for over 160 years our Nation has honored her fallen warriors and patriots. These hallowed grounds are a lasting memorial to the men and women who have faithfully served our nation. There are over 450,000 Americans buried here. As you look out upon the rows of headstones, each stone a brick in the foundation of freedom upon which we stand today, I encourage you to remember this:



No place in Arlington National Cemetery can be purchased; each must be earned through honorable service.

Let us pray: Most merciful God, whose wisdom is beyond our understanding: deal graciously with those who mourn. Surround them with your love, that they may not be overwhelmed by their loss, but have confidence in your goodness, and strength to meet the days to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dear family, friends, and honored guests, we gather here today, in the sacred ground of Arlington National Cemetery, to lay to rest one of our nation's sons, Second Lieutenant Gilbert Rauh —a young man who gave his life in service during the Second World War. Though the years have passed and though none of us here today had the privilege of knowing him personally, we know enough: he served. He answered the call of duty. And he never came home—until now.

Today, we receive him with honor, with gratitude, and with love.

The Scriptures tell us, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." Gilbert did just that—not only for his friends, but for a world yearning for peace. He stepped into the unknown, not for reward or recognition, but because it was right. That is courage. That is sacrifice. That is love.

Although he had no children, no spouse to mourn him, he is not forgotten. He has you — his family by blood, by name, and by heritage — who have come to witness his homecoming. He also has us — his family in uniform, his brothers and sisters in arms — who never stop honoring our own.

We may not know what dreams he held or what joys he hoped to find after the war, but we do know he gave all he had to give. And now, we commit him to this hallowed ground with the dignity he has long deserved.

Abraham Lincoln once stood on ground made sacred by sacrifice and said: "It is for us the living to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced...that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion."

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Gilbert gave that full measure. He answered the call of duty, not for recognition or reward, but because he believed in something greater than himself. He believed in service. In honor. In the values that define us as a people: liberty, justice, and sacrifice.

Gilbert now joins the eternal ranks of heroes who have consecrated this ground with their lives. He takes his place among those who, through their sacrifice, have shaped the destiny of a nation.

Let us remember: his story does not end in sacrifice, it continues in legacy. In the freedoms we cherish, in the peace he helped secure, and in the solemn promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die."

So today, we say not just goodbye, but welcome home. Rest now, faithful servant. Your duty is done. Your country remembers. And your God receives you.

Today, after 80 long years, Gilbert has come home. He is not forgotten. He is not alone.

He is honored—forever.

May his sacrifice inspire our devotion.

May his memory strengthen our resolve.

And may he rest now, at last, in the peace he so valiantly earned.

HONORS: Second Lieutenant Gilbert Andrew Rauh honorably served his nation in World War II. During his time in service, he received many awards and decorations, including the Air Medal. Let it be known that he is a member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, signifying that he shed his blood in defense of our nation. For his honorable service in the United States Army, our nation hereby bestows military honors.

In life HE honored the flag, now this flag will honor HIM.

Let us pray, and COMMIT HIM to his final rest: O God, whose blessed Son was laid in a tomb in the garden: Bless, we pray, this resting place, set apart for the repose of your servant, Gilbert, that he whose remains are interred here may rest from his labors in peace and quietness, until the resurrection on the last day, when the New Jerusalem comes down, the dead are raised, and the righteous are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to Almighty God our brother Gilbert, and we commit his body to its resting place; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Amen.

Receive this Blessing: Almighty God, Father of mercies and giver of comfort: deal graciously, we pray, with all who mourn; that, casting all their care on you, they may know the consolation of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Off to the left, the firing squad cracked the silence delivering a three volley twenty-one gun salute.

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As they snapped back to attention, a distance off to right under a large shade tree amidst rows of head stones, a lone bugler played Taps, ever so slowly and softly. Emotions could no longer be contained. It was a moment that will forever be etched in my soul.

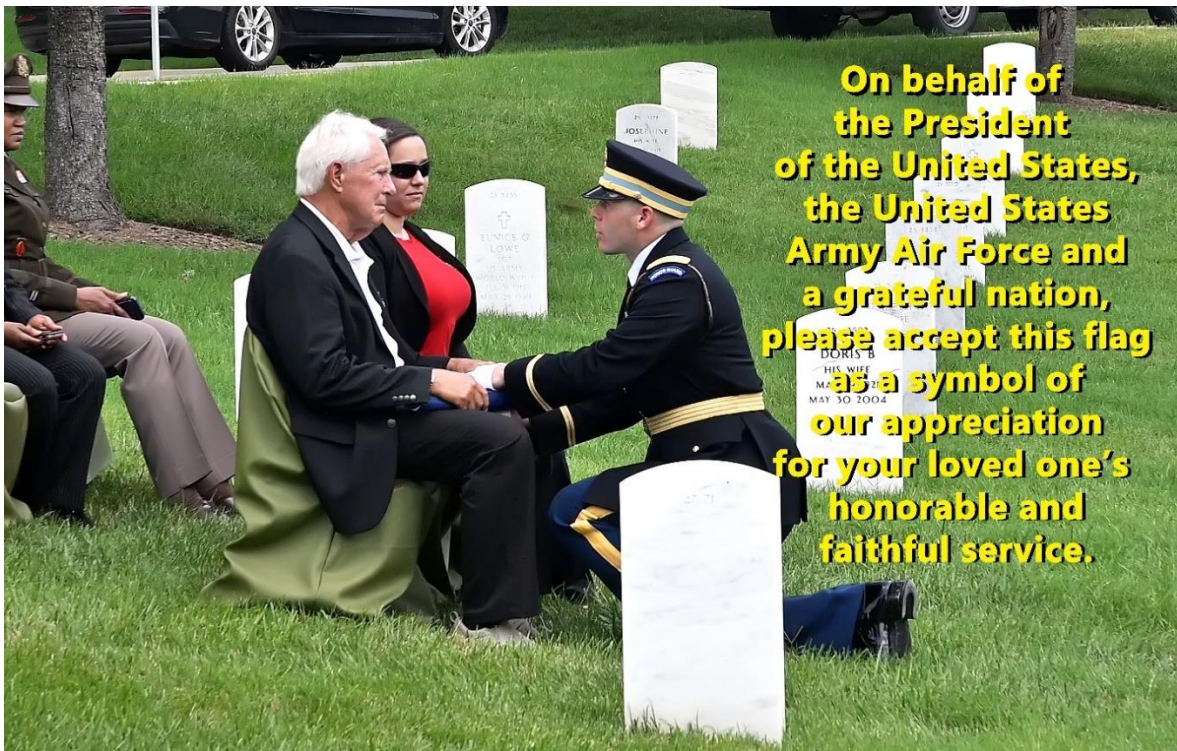
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The flag was folded for the last time, as *America the Beautiful* echoed through the rolling hills.



Carrying the flag, the leader of the Honor Guard approached me and went down on one knee. Looking straight into my eyes, he placed the folded flag in my lap and while we both held it, he spoke -

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He stood to attention before me, staring straight ahead into the distance. He held that position for what seemed like an eternity. There was not a sound. Then his head slowly looked down at the flag in my lap. That was followed by a final salute – a purposeful salute that took a full twenty-one seconds.



The dirge of drums began again and, struggling to contain his own emotions, he turned to his left to join the Army Band, Platoon of Riflemen and Color Guard as they marched off following the empty caisson down Pershing Drive. The service was over – but it will never be forgotten.

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At ceremony's end, I paid my last respects and placed my father's World War II cap badge with Gibby's remains for his final interment. In some small way, these best friends are together again. My father, would have appreciated that.



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Gibby was home and received the welcome he was due.

After eighty-two years,

His LONGEST MISSION,

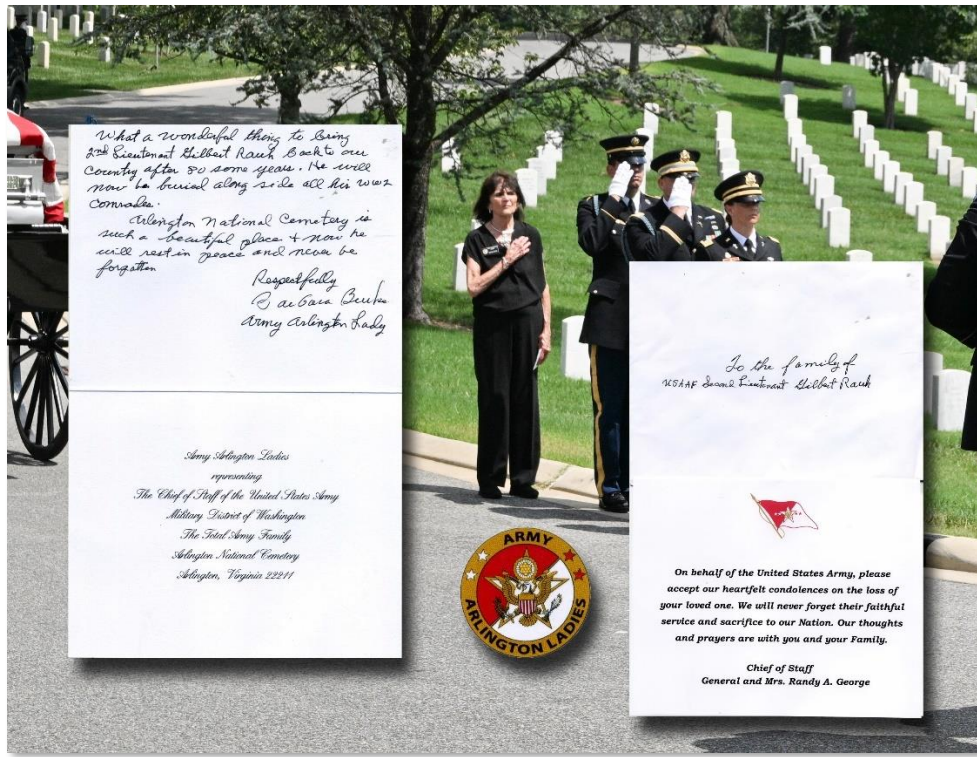
was finally over.



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Several people presented themselves to express their condolences and profound happiness that Gibby was finally home and recognized so beautifully for his sacrifice. The first was Barbara Burke, representing the United States Army Chief of Staff, Randy George and the Arlington Ladies Association.



I was both flattered and humbled that the Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, Kelly McKeague and Military Assistant to the Director, USAF Lt Colonel Matthew Kless, took the time from their very busy activities to attend. These five people are former strangers who provided much love and support. For that, we remain in their debt.



Left to Right:

Peyton Sharkey – author's grandson & photographer

Lt Col Matthew Kless, DPAA

Maj Gen Kelly McKeague, DPAA

Dr. Sandra Heredia, USAF, Pentagon

Author

Rachel Jones – Casualty Assistance Officer

Col Antionette N. Rainey, Pentagon