

### CHAPTER 11

#### HISTORY

As far back as the early 1800s, Quartermaster officers assigned to frontier outposts constructed cemetery plots, buried the dead in marked graves, and kept a fairly uniform record of burial. Though commendable, these efforts hardly afforded the practical experience needed to handle combat fatalities resulting from a large-scale conflict. No formal policy addressed that possibility either.

The Mexican War (1846-47) provided the first real test of the Army's ability to care for its war dead, but with results that were far from satisfactory. In one instance, General Zachary Taylor saw to it that the dead were properly collected and buried on the battlefield following his celebrated victory at Buena Vista. Unfortunately, he neglected to mark the site of the burial on the map accompanying his official report. Years later, when the U.S. government sought to erect a monument to honor the fallen heroes, no burial site could be found.



A similar experience marked the campaign of General Winfield Scott, whose troops landed at Vera Cruz and marched overland to Mexico City. Of the hundreds who died and were buried along the way, only a fraction were located afterwards, and none have ever been identified.

The actual foundation of today's Graves Registration mission is more readily traced to the outbreak of the American Civil War. That tragic conflict elicited more sacrifice and accounted for more battle deaths than all of our other major wars combined. At the same time public sensibilities towards the treatment of dead soldiers appeared to be changing, possibly in response to the sight of so many citizen-soldiers donning the blue or grey. Still, this heightened concern for the war dead did not automatically translate into an improved battlefield scenario.

There the old tried and true methods of burial remained the norm. Almost invariably, the dead were buried by details from the line, right at, or very near the scene of the battle. When the armies moved on, those burial grounds with their temporary markers were left to deteriorate, leaving little hope of locating or identifying the grave of any given decedent.

Another factor contributed to the problem of identifying and locating individual graves. Burial "squads" were frequently made up of POWs, or other less than willing hands. Often illiterate or careless, the results of their actions were fairly predictable; the true identity of many of the dead was lost to error. During the action at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Courthouse approximately



## CHAPTER 11 – NEVER GIVING UP

1,500 men died; only a fourth of those were ever identified. (Roughly 58% of all those who died during the Civil War were positively identified.) Countless notices appearing in the newspapers of the time, asking for information about those missing in action bore witness to this legacy of uncertainty.

Other examples of concern over the Army's failure to provide adequate graves registration, as well as of the negative effect this lack of support had on the troops abounded. When the Union Army of the Potomac crossed the Rapidan River and entered Virginia on 4 May 1864, those soldiers were horrified to discover the bleached bones of comrades who'd fallen the year before lying exposed on the ground. At this point many of the troops searched through the remains hoping to discover clues that would designate the remains as those of departed friends. They looked for identifying marks on clothing and equipment, evidence of fatal wounds, and peculiarities of tooth structure as part of their search. (It is interesting to note that these methods of establishing identification would become part of standard operating procedure for 20th century GRREG personnel.) Finally, before moving into the Wilderness, those troops took time to bury the exposed remains.



The fear of being listed among the “unknowns” weighed upon the combat troops. Even though the War Department did not require or issue any sort of identifying tag, the rank and file often took steps to ensure that their identity would be known should they be killed on the battlefield. Identifying markers carved of wood were carried by many soldiers, as were medallions bearing their names and other information. Prior to attacking the entrenched Confederates at Mine Run during the winter of 1863, the men of the Union Fifth Corps wrote their names on small scraps of paper and pinned them to their uniforms.

Still, the military hierarchy of the day, apparently failed to realize not only the importance of some type of permanent identification for combat soldiers, but also the obvious need for specially trained units and personnel who could properly care for the war dead. On only one occasion, after the Battle of Fort Stevens outside of Washington DC in the summer, 1864, did a group resembling a modern day GRREG unit come into play.

A Captain, James M. Moore, newly appointed head of the QM Cemeterial Division led a group of his personnel on to the battlefield after the fighting had ended. There they began a systematic search and recovery of remains and personal effects, eventually managing to identify all the remains. Their achievement of a perfect score was not to be matched within the U.S. Army for many decades. Unfortunately, that perfect score also failed to lead to the use of trained GR personnel on a routine basis. Despite this, the Civil War saw the QM Corps clearly established as the responsible agent for caring for the Army's dead. After the war, between 1866 and 1870, the Cemeterial Division disinterred the remains of nearly 300,000 war dead and laid them to rest in 73 newly created national cemeteries.

Conspicuous advances in the theory and practice of Army graves registration were not to take place until the turn of the century, during the Spanish-American War. As a result of experiences in Cuba, it was learned that successful identification of remains depended more than anything on shortening the time span between death, original burial, and registration of graves. Later, Chaplain Charles C. Pierce, who established



## CHAPTER 11 – NEVER GIVING UP

the QM Office of Identification in the Philippines, outlined some of the principles and techniques needed to place care of war dead on a more scientific basis. He recommended inclusion of an “identity disc” in the combat field kit, and the establishment of central collection points or agencies where all pertinent mortuary records could be gathered, filed, checked, traced, and corrected. Positive identification, he reasoned, should admit little doubt and no discrepancies.

The Quartermaster Department was reorganized in 1912 and became the Quartermaster Corps, a fully militarized branch of the service, much as we know it today. Specialized troops took over most of the functions previously performed by civilians or detachments from the line. Thus, on the eve of the United States entry into World War I, the way was cleared for the establishment of trained Quartermaster units which would care for the dead.

New regulations adopted in 1913 affirmed the Army’s now strong commitment toward positive identification and proper burial of the dead. New techniques had made their way into procedure, particularly in regards to identification. Detailed maps and sketches showing exact locations of all temporary grave sites were to be filed at the time of initial burial. This would ease the process of disinterment at a later date. By 1917 the War Department moved a step further, amending Army Regulations so that all combat soldiers would be required to wear the familiar aluminum “dog tags” in the field. These changes reflected an awareness of past lessons, and a desire to improve the level of care.

While readying the American Expeditionary Force for its trip to Europe during World War I, General Pershing requested the establishment of a Graves Registration Service assigned to the Western Front. Major Pierce, who had headed up the Office of Identification in Manila two decades earlier, and since retired, was recalled to active service on behalf of the Quartermaster Corps. He began training GRREG (Graves Registration) troops and units at the Philadelphia QM Depot in the summer of 1917. By October his headquarters had moved to Tours, France. From this location, 19 Quartermaster GRREG companies were dispatched to every section of the combat zone during the next year and a half.



While the headquarters staff of the Graves Registration Service tended to the consolidation and preservation of mortuary records, and the maintenance of semipermanent cemeteries at the rear of the battlefield, the GRREG companies themselves offered close support to the line. The dedication and esprit of member personnel was often noteworthy to the point of extremes. No risk appeared too dangerous or effort too great if it promised identification of a “buddy’s” remains. General Pershing wrote of one particular unit’s activities in the spring of 1918:

*(They) began their work under heavy shell of fire and gas, and, although troops were in dugouts, these men immediately went to the cemetery and in order to preserve records and locations, repaired and erected new crosses as fast as old ones were blown down. They also completed the extension to the cemetery, this work occupying a period of one and a half hours, during which time shells were falling continuously and they were subjected to mustard gas. They gathered many bodies which had been first in the hands of the Germans, and were later retaken by American counterattacks. Identification was especially difficult, all papers and tags having been removed, and most of the bodies being in a terrible condition and beyond recognition.”*

## CHAPTER 11 – NEVER GIVING UP

During the Great War, as it was called, relatives of soldiers opted to have their kin remain in the country where they had fallen. Teddy Roosevelt added impetus to this movement by requesting that his own son, Lieutenant Quentin Roosevelt, be buried near the ground where he was killed. His expression – ‘Where the tree falls, let it lie’ – echoed the sentiments of many. In all, eight permanent cemeteries were established in Europe by war’s end (six in France, and one each in Belgium and England) wherein approximately 30,000 veterans were laid to rest. Another 47,000 bodies were returned to the United States. During World War I, the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service reduced the percentage of unknowns to less than three bodies for every hundred recovered. While organizational and operational refinements helped reduce the time span between original burial and final disposition of remains, a new and more scientific approach aided immeasurably in the process of identification. World War I saw the coming of age of Army graves registration.

During World War II the task of graves registration proved far greater.

More than 250,000 Americans died and were buried in temporary cemeteries around the world. On the European continent alone, fighting had scattered dead U.S. forces over a million and a half square miles of territory, making the recovery process more difficult. Further, new weapons (including aerial bombardment and massive use of artillery) often rendered those killed in action unrecognizable. The standard Graves Registration Company in World War II consisted of 260 men and five officers. It was intended to support three divisions, one platoon per division. Each platoon was divided into two sections – a collecting squad and an evacuation squad. GRREG companies collected, evacuated, identified, and supervised the burial of the dead. These field units also collected and disposed of personal effects and, subject to the approval of higher headquarters, selected sites for temporary cemeteries. As in World War I, work often had to be done under extremely hazardous conditions. The famed war correspondent, Ernie Pyle, reported on GRREG personnel seeking refuge in the freshly-dug graves during the heaviest fighting at Anzio.



Another example of heroic service can be found in the record of a Quartermaster Graves Registration Company which scrambled ashore on D-Day with the First Army. There they gathered bodies from the beaches, in the water, and inland, actually cutting many from wrecked landing craft submerged in the shallow water. By the end of D-Plus-2, one platoon alone had buried 457 American dead; by working day and night, the three platoons had been able to clear the beaches of all remains.



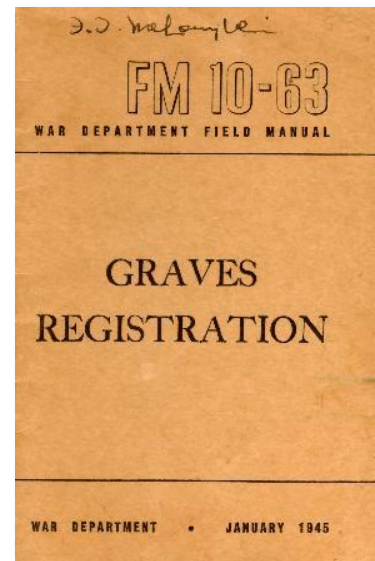


## CHAPTER 11 – NEVER GIVING UP

### WWII RECOVERIES BEGIN

At the war's end, American 78,750 casualties remained unaccounted for around the globe, some where they had fallen, some in the depths of the oceans, and many in temporary cemeteries scattered throughout the world where battles occurred.

Following the war, the United States Government launched a global initiative called, "The Return of the World War II Dead Program," to locate aircraft crash sites, comb former battlefields for isolated graves, and disinter temporary military cemeteries around the globe. The U.S. Army created the American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) to perform this task. Once remains had been recovered, they were transported to Central Identification Laboratories (CIL), where technicians confirmed or established identifications of more than 280,000 individuals. The identified missing personnel were then buried according to the wishes of their next of kin. The program operated from 1945 to 1951, working until all known leads were exhausted. The Army program was a worldwide endeavor employing approximately 13,000 personnel, and costing \$163.8 million in wartime dollars.



After the end of the official program for returning the dead of WWII, the U.S. Army Mortuary system continued to recover and identify smaller numbers of WWII missing personnel. These identifications stemmed largely from reports of remains discovered by the citizens of the countries where the casualties occurred. Upon receipt of such a report, a mortuary team would investigate, recover, and identify the remains. As a result, more than 200 additional missing personnel were identified between 1951 and 1976.

Not all Soldier Dead were identified because of the condition of the body when it was received by the GRS. Unknown Soldier Dead were assigned an X number since there was no serial number by which to identify them. ... Unknown remains were placed into a mattress cover and the X number was painted on the bag.



After 1976, the task of recovering and identifying the remains of WWII missing personnel fell largely to the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii (CILHI). From 1976 to 2003, that organization sent recovery teams into the field using anthropologists and odontologists to identify an additional 346 individuals. In 2003, CILHI merged with Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA) to form the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Accounting Command (JPAC). JPAC accounted for an additional 300 individuals.

In 2003, historians at the Defense Prisoner of War Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) began to develop a comprehensive database of WWII missing personnel whose remains were not recovered or identified after the war. This database was a significant step in creating a comprehensive plan to research WWII missing personnel.

## CHAPTER 11 – NEVER GIVING UP

Historians from DPMO were primarily responsible for answering questions from family members about missing personnel from World War II until January 2010 and the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2010. Responding to this law, the Department of Defense expanded World War II accounting efforts to more proactive case development. Historians and analysts at DPMO collaborated with JPAC in researching, investigating, and nominating for recovery the cases of U.S. casualties still missing from WWII.



The AGRS laid the groundwork for the modern Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), which continues the mission of locating, recovering, and identifying the remains of American personnel from all conflicts. The ethos of "leave no man behind" that was reinforced by these post-WWII efforts is still a core principle in the U.S. military's commitment to its service members.

The dedication and perseverance of these post-WWII recovery teams are a lasting testament to the value placed on honoring those who served and ensuring that they receive a final, respectful resting place.



**DPAA - Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency** - A U.S. Department of Defense organization dedicated to locating, recovering, and identifying American personnel who are missing or unaccounted for from past conflicts. The DPAA's mission is to provide the fullest possible accounting for missing service members to their families and the nation. Its motto, "Fulfilling Our Nation's Promise," reflects the enduring commitment to recover and bring home fallen military personnel.

The DPAA was officially established in 2015 through the consolidation of several existing agencies involved in the POW/MIA recovery mission:

1. Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC)
2. Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO)
3. Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory (LSEL)

These organizations were brought together to streamline and enhance efforts to locate and identify the remains of American service members lost in conflicts spanning World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and other military engagements.

The DPAA's mission covers a broad range of responsibilities:

- Search and Recovery Missions: Deploying specialized teams of historians, researchers, and forensic experts to remote and often hazardous locations worldwide to locate and recover remains.
- Identification of Recovered Remains: Conducting forensic and DNA testing at their state-of-the-art laboratories to establish positive identification.
- Collaboration with Families and the Public: Working closely with families to provide updates, gather information, and offer support throughout the process.
- International Partnerships: Collaborating with foreign governments, local communities, and NGOs to gain access to recovery sites and historical records.

## CHAPTER 11 – NEVER GIVING UP

The process of accounting for missing personnel is highly structured and involves two key activities – recovery and identification. Recovery includes three key steps:

1. Research and Investigation:

- DPAA's historians and researchers analyze military records, including Individual Deceased Personnel Files, eye-witness accounts, and other historical data to identify potential loss sites.
- Archival research is often paired with on-the-ground interviews in various countries.



2. Field Investigations:

- When a potential site is identified, an investigation team is dispatched to survey the location.
- Teams may include specialists in unexploded ordnance (UXO), archaeologists, medics, and other field experts to ensure safety and thorough site assessment.

3. Excavation and Recovery:

- Once a site is validated, it is given a numerical Case Number and a recovery team conducts meticulous excavation.
- Any remains or personal effects are carefully documented, mapped, containerized and transported to the DPAA lab. Each separable set of remains (when possible) is assigned an "X" file identifier (X-<Grave Site Case Number> <Consecutive letters of the alphabet> – i.e., X-305A). Those files are kept in the containers with the recovered remains.



The DPAA has two primary laboratories for analyzing remains:

1. Central Identification Laboratory (CIL) in Honolulu, Hawaii: This is the largest and most prominent lab, responsible for conducting advanced forensic work and analyzing remains brought in from Pacific and Asian conflicts.

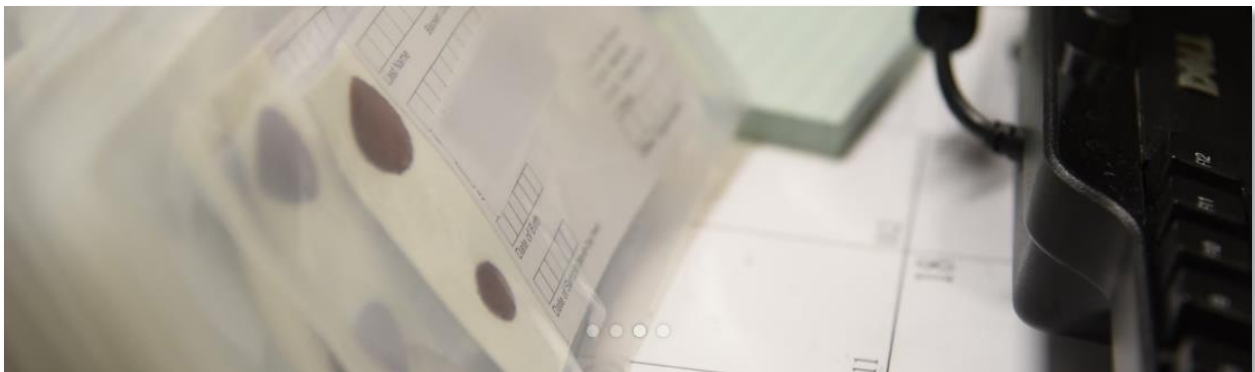




## CHAPTER 11 – NEVER GIVING UP



2. Armed Forces Repository of Specimen Samples for the Identification of Remains (AFRSSIR) - DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, Del. -- Millions of blood samples in the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System building serve as an exhaustive and invaluable resource for the identification of fallen service members' remains.





## CHAPTER 11 – NEVER GIVING UP

The labs employ a diverse team of experts, including forensic anthropologists and archaeologists, forensic odontologists (dental specialists), forensic pathologists and DNA analysts and technicians. A board-certified anthropologist leads each U.S.-led joint recovery effort with host countries.

The Central Identification Laboratory – Hawaii (CILHI) anthropologist ensures the scientific integrity of the work, while teams catalogue and transport their findings to forensic scientists in Hawaii. This example Form 044b, illustrates the type of records kept in an Individual Deceased Personnel File.

Expert scientists work in special facilities to identify remains. With common forensic techniques they gain clues by reviewing official records that include military and eye-witness reports along with wreckage and personal items from the sites. The most valuable evidence, however, comes from comparing skeletal and dental remains to the records of missing individuals, Isotope Analysis for dietary and geographic origins and 3D Imaging and Facial Reconstruction.

Some cases require DNA typing. DNA samples are compared against the U.S. Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) database, which contains family reference samples provided by relatives including the two-spot blood sample Jeanne provided in 2013.

Once officials approve the identity, representatives of the appropriate service and scientific community visit the family to explain their findings. Then the DPAA contacts the service member's family and provides support throughout the process of repatriation and burial.

The DPAA operates globally, with active missions in countries like Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia: Focused on the Vietnam War; North and South Korea: Conducting operations to recover remains from the Korean War; Germany, France, and the Pacific Islands: Searching for WWII casualties; Russia and the Former Soviet Union: Investigating Cold War and WWII losses.

Its work often requires extensive diplomatic coordination, as many loss sites are in remote or politically sensitive areas. In recent years, the DPAA has formed partnerships with various nations, museums, universities, and private organizations to expand its reach.

UNKNOWN X-17

19. BLACK OUT PARTS OF BODY NOT RECORDED

Left side of head missing

One (1) unmatched left ulna } From one man.  
One (1) unmatched radius }  
One (1) extra left femur } From one man.

20. MASS BURIAL CERTIFICATE (IF APPLICABLE)  
(Wherein segregation in whole or parts is impossible)

I CERTIFY THAT THE GROUP REMAINS CONSIST OF PARTS OF 3 DECEASETS BASED ON THE PRESENCE OF ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING ANATOMICAL PARTS:

Charles E. Snow, SIGNATURE OF MEDICAL OFFICER Anthropologist

21. REMARKS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Picture a tall, young man of 22 with a slender muscular body build and with ash brown hair, fine to medium in texture.

The skull vault is average in size and a rather broad oval in outline with an average amount of backhead protrusion.

The facial proportions were long and narrow with a palate which shows anterior pinching. The lower jaw is quite narrow but deep and appears to have had a rather narrow median point.

Fluoroscopic examination negative. Tooth chart completed.

I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE PERSONALLY VIEWED THE REMAINS OF DECEASED AND THAT ALL RESULTING INFORMATION HAS BEEN RECORDED TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE

TYPED NAME, GRADE, ARMY OR SERVICE, AND ORGANIZATION  
O. W. GREENWOOD, CAPT., QMC  
CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY  
AND MAUSOLEUM, APO 957

SIGNATURE  
O. W. Greenwood

QMC FORM 1044D  
10 MAR 47

## CHAPTER 11 – NEVER GIVING UP

### Impact and Achievements:

The DPAA has made significant progress in recovering and identifying thousands of American service members over the years. For example:

- Over 1,500 Vietnam War service members have been accounted for since 1973.
- Hundreds of Korean War remains have been recovered and identified.
- World War II recoveries have steadily increased as new technology and historical research uncover long-forgotten sites.

While the DPAA has seen many successes, it faces ongoing challenges:

- Remote and Hazardous Sites: Many recovery locations are difficult to access, such as mountain ranges, jungles, or underwater sites.
- Degradation of Remains: In some cases, the condition of remains makes identification extremely challenging, particularly for older conflicts.
- Diplomatic and Political Hurdles: Engaging with countries like North Korea or navigating sensitive historical issues in places like Russia requires careful negotiation.

