

ATTACHMENT NUMBER 3

**PLAINTIFF' REPLY TO DEFENDANTS' OPPOSITION TO
MOTION TO INTERVENE FILED BY SALLY HILL JONES**

CIV. A. NO. SA-12-CA-1002-FB(HJB)

US Army Quartermaster Foundation
Fort Lee, Virginia

MAKE A DONATION

BECOME A MEMBER

Homeward Bound

Quartermaster Review-May/June 1954
Colonel John D. Martz, Jr., QMC

Graves Registration and recovery in the Korean War

Note: At the time this article was written the term Graves Registration was used for what is now call Mortuary Affairs.

Christmas 1950 dawned as a cold dreary day in Korea. Early that morning a small group of American Graves Registration Service personnel together with a number of Korean laborers, entered the temporary United Nations Cemetery near the Port of Inchon. Their determined purpose was to disinter the remains of their fallen comrades who were interred there, and to evacuate them from the area before arrival of the driving Chinese Communist Forces. Three days later their task was completed with the loading of the last body aboard a vessel anchored in the harbor at Inchon. This ship sailed from the port a few short hours before the area was overrun by the enemy forces. Thus the remains of 864 of our gallant servicemen who gave their lives for their country were recovered and started on the first portion of their long journey home.

It is interesting to reconstruct the various prior actions which led to this recovery. As early as the fall of 1950 serious consideration had been given by the Quartermaster of the Far East Command, Maj. Gen. K. L. Hastings, now The Quartermaster General, to the problem of removing our casualties from the temporary cemeteries in Korea and returning them to their homelands during the combat period. This was a new concept of service to our deceased and their next-of-kin, for the return of our dead in World Wars I and II had not been inaugurated until after cessation of hostilities. He took action to determine the requirements for supplies, equipment, and personnel, both military and civilian, and to resolve the problem of obtaining the facilities which would be necessary to carry out such a program. Concurrently, the Office of The Quartermaster General had been developing corollary plans, to the extent that a Central identification Unit had been activated at Fort Lee on October 27, 1950, and placed under intensive training. Steps also were taken to initiate procurement of necessary caskets and other items for such a program.

By mid-December key officers with previous Graves Registration experience were being assembled in the Tokyo Area to form a nucleus for the Zone Headquarters and other units necessary to accomplish the mission. Preliminary plans called for the location of such an installation in Korea; however, reconnaissance failed to reveal any buildings or facilities which were considered suitable. Construction of adequate facilities was estimated to require a period of 60 to 90 days. At the same time the entrance into the war of the Chinese Communist Forces on the side of the enemy had already caused our forces to withdraw from areas in North Korea where they had established small temporary United Nations cemeteries. The enemy forces were pressing steadily southward, and it was difficult to estimate where their advance would be checked. hurried reconnaissance revealed that adequate facilities could be developed in buildings immediately available at Camp Kokura on the northern tip of Kyushu, the southern-most of the four major islands of Japan. Evacuation operations were started immediately on the premise that these remains could be held in temporary mausoleums at Kokura pending the acquisition of personnel and facilities to begin actual processing operations.

On January 2, 1951, Zone Headquarters was activated at Kokura, together with a Field Operating Section to which eventually would be assigned the necessary embalmers to perform the mission. That first day a nucleus of 10 officers, 51 enlisted men, and 1 civilian was available for duty. On the same date the ship carrying the remains from the Inchon Cemetery docked at Kokura, and this small group labored side-by-side for two 16-hour days in reverently unloading, transporting, and placing all remains in assigned locations in the mausoleums. At the same time our Graves Registration units in Korea proceeded to disinter other temporary cemeteries in South Korea including those at Taejon, Taegu No. 1 and No. 2, and Masan. The remains from these cemeteries were all transferred to Kokura and placed in suitable mausoleums in less than four weeks.

By late January, remains from the cemetery at Miryang were also disinterred and transferred to Pusan, Korea, for trans-shipment to Kokura. At this time, the advance of the enemy had been checked, and it was apparently at we were not going to be forced to withdraw from the entire Korean peninsula. During this same month a new United Nations Military Cemetery had been established at Tanggok on the outskirts of the City of Pusan, to which all United Nations casualties were then evacuated for interment. It was determined that the remains from the Miryang Cemetery should be temporarily reinterred in the Tanggok Cemetery until such time as the large numbers already transferred to Kokura could be processed.

At this time a decision was made in the Far East Command and approved by the Department of Defense to return all American casualties to their homeland on the premise that it would be inadvisable to establish any permanent cemeteries in Korea. On the 22nd of January, The Central Identification Unit arrived from Fort Lee; initial supplies had already been received; laboratory and office facilities had been readied; and the actual processing of remains for identification commenced on 29 January 1951.

During the next four months the majority of remains being held at Kokura were processed for identification, embalmed, casketed and prepared for shipment to the United States. In the Central Identification Laboratory, teams of military and civilian technicians examined the remains in detail for the purpose of recording all information concerning physical characteristics, together with any other information, which would assist in the identification of that individual. Fingerprints were taken wherever it was physically possible; tooth charts were prepared by dental technicians; hair color, skin pigmentation, height, shoe size, and numerous other items were recorded. Personal effects found upon the remains, together with various items of clothing, were examined in detail in an adjoining chemical laboratory. Where chemical means failed, infrared photography was used to bring our faded writing, serial numbers, laundry marks, and similar information from the items examined. In the main laboratory skilled photographers recorded on film all tattoos, scars, physical abnormalities, and fingertip dermi in cases that could not be fingerprinted. Bone

malformations and peculiar tooth and cranial formations were also photographed as well as dentures, upon which the man's name or serial number was frequently inscribed. A fluoroscope was used to check all clothing removed from remains for additional bone fragments and to inspect the remains to determine the extent of injuries and type of missile causing death. X-rays were also taken of portions of the body when there was reason to believe that the deceased had suffered serious bone injury prior to death. By this means, X-ray evidence of an old fracture could be compared with the man's medical records as an additional means of confirming his identification.

Several physical anthropologists were included among our technical personnel. These specialists determined the individual's race, age, and distinctive physical appearance. When, as a result of tank accidents and air crashes, the remains of several individuals were intermingled, the anthropologists made the necessary segregations and reconstructed the physical characteristics of each individual.

This processing was frequently quite dangerous. On many occasions live grenades and small arms ammunitions were found when the clothing was removed. In some cases the firing-pin releases were badly rusted and in momentary danger of breaking and activating the grenades.

Reports compiled in the laboratory giving the results of the work were then forwarded to the headquarters Unit, which compared the data obtained from the remains with those available on the same individual prior to death. A complete case history was prepared, establishing beyond all doubt the identity of each individual. These documents were then reviewed by a Board of Officers, and the identification was accepted as positive. Upon the completion of this work the remains were transferred to the mortuary where teams of military and civilian licensed embalmers prepared and casketed each individual.

For the first homebound shipment 51 of our honored dead, widely representative of the officers and men of our Armed Forces, were transported by rail to Yokohama. There, on March 11, 1951, after elaborate shipside ceremonies, they embarked on the long ocean voyage.

Shipments subsequent to the initial one from Yokohama were made at regular 10-day intervals through the Port of Moji, which is adjacent to Kokura. These shipments commenced on March 22, 1951, and continued through September 1952, at which time a semi-monthly schedule was effected and continued until September of 1953. Prior to the departure of each vessel from Moji, a religious ceremony with military honors was held at shipside.

By May of 1951, the processing of remains originally shipped to Kokura had progressed to the point where a disinterment program from the Tanggok Cemetery was initiated. Accordingly, groups of remains were disinterred and transported to Kokura for processing as rapidly as laboratory work-schedules permitted. Sufficient technical personnel had become available in April 1951 to permit the initiation of a two-shift operation in the laboratory, and the volume of remains to be processed forced the continuation of this schedule until November 1952.

The personnel engaged in the work at Kokura represented a highly heterogeneous group. The military personnel available included a surprisingly large number of licensed embalmers, in grades from private to major, who were screened from our service personnel throughout the Far East Command and the continental United States. A large number of civilian embalmers and technical specialists were recruited in the United States. Our anthropologists included two Americans one European, who had extensive experience in the World-War-II program; and one Japanese, who was a professor from a leading university in Japan; each highly trained in his specialized profession. In fact, all of the major races of mankind were represented among this small group of experts who performed the anthropological work, a highly desirable but extremely unusual situation. A number of indigenous workers were also employed to perform such highly important tasks as cleaning and scrubbing our facilities so that we might maintain the high standards of sanitation essential to the success of the project. Experienced identification investigators from the Memorial Division, Office of The Quartermaster General, and numerous clerical personnel were also used in headquarters operations.

A major problem developed in the embalming mortuary in the early summer of 1951. Dust, generated from the tremendous quantities of hardening compound required to embalm remains of the type then being handled, became a serious health hazard to personnel engaged in this work. Respiratory infections developed, a number of our men had to be relieved from their duties, and additional technical personnel had to be brought in. Temporary relief was obtained by the use of respiratory masks. Eventually, after consultation with air-conditioning experts, a down-draft exhaust system was designed and built around each mortuary table. The system was highly effective, and its use resulted in the elimination of the health hazard as well as the loss of many manhours of work. Medical personnel and sanitary engineers assisted in the development of a sanitation program. After the development of a new insecticide known as Lindane the sanitary problem was completely solved.

My November of 1951 the evacuation of all American remains from temporary cemeteries in South Korea was completed with the exception of a small number in the ceremonial plaza of the United Nations Military Cemetery at Tanggok. At this time another "first" in the history of the Graves Registration Service was initiated. Plans and procedures were developed whereby all American casualties were evacuated directly from the combat area to the laboratory center at Kokura. This evacuation program required a major change in embalming procedures. The reduced time between dates of death and the dates when remains were available for embalming permitted our technicians to adopt arterial injection procedures. This, of course, made necessary the establishment of an additional laboratory with mortuary tables and equipment suitable for this method of embalming. With the elimination of temporary burials, weekly memorial retreat services were inaugurated in the mausoleum area. On these occasions, the chaplain, who was a permanent member of the staff at our American Graves Registration Service Group Headquarters, was joined by others from nearby installations, so that representatives of all the major faiths-Protestant, Catholic, and Hebrew-participated periodically in the ceremonies. A flag-draped casket was escorted by an Honor Guard to a place of prominence near the flagpole. There, in the presence of the assembled troops, religious rites for the dead were pronounced by the participating chaplains. After the firing of three volleys, the sounding of taps, and the lowering of the colors, the symbolic casket was quietly returned to the mortuary to join the others there which were awaiting shipment home.

While many individual problems arose, it is a tribute to all who were engaged in the operations at Kokura that the morale and devotion to duty was extremely high under the difficult conditions. The changeover from handling remains which had previously been interred to handling those which were immediately evacuated from the battlefield exerted a profound effect upon all personnel. It brought each man closer to the horrors of war. This effect was quite noticeable on the Japanese laborers, who had gradually become imbued with the spirit and high purpose of our mission. On the day following the arrival of casualties directly from the battle area, most of the Japanese personnel reported for work with flowers in quantities which filled our laboratories to overflowing. These men were fully conscious of the benefits which they and their countrymen were receiving by virtue of the sacrifices which the American Armed Forces were making in Korea.

As the Winter of 1952 drew to a close and summer approached it became evident that the use of water transportation between Pusan and Kokura for the current evacuation program was too slow. Accordingly, plans were laid to use air transportation and early in April a daily airlift was inaugurated between airfields near the front lines in Korea and the Ashiya Air Force Base, located approximately 20 miles from Kokura, Japan. With the ensuing summer weather, small refrigeration units were located at the Graves Registration collecting points adjacent to the airstrips in Korea, and larger refrigeration facilities were installed adjacent to the laboratory at Kokura. The development of these procedures was so effective that many of our combat casualties started home from Japan within a period of 30 days from the date of death in Korea.

As an adjunct to the current evacuation program, our Graves Registration units in Korea initiated a thorough search and recovery program in former battle areas for the purpose of finding and recovering every possible body. This operation enabled us to account for a large number of casualties previously reported as missing in action. A special Research Branch was established in Zone Headquarters to assemble information from unit command reports, operations reports, battle maps, missing air crew reports, and individual case histories, in an effort to obtain every possible piece of information which would be of assistance to our Search and Recovery teams in Korea. With the termination of actual hostilities last July, this search and recovery program was intensified. To date, approximately 85 percent of the Korean peninsula now under our control has been thoroughly and completely searched.

During 1952 an important step in expediting the processing of Unknowns was undertaken at Kokura through the use of mechanical equipment. All available information, including physical and dental data, for the unidentified remains in the laboratory and for each unresolved casualty was punched on EAM cards. Subsequent sortings matched cards on which like characteristics were shown. For example, a card on an unidentified case may have indicated that the decedent was recovered in a specific map-sheet area, that he had red hair, was six feet tall, had previously fractured his right upper arm, lacked central upper incisor teeth, and bad fillings in his molars; successive sortings of the entire deck of EAM records for the unresolved casualties produced the card or cards which contained some or all of the characteristics of the case being investigated. In many instances this method provided a quick way of effecting initial associations between unresolved casualties and unidentified remains. Once a tentative association was made, a trained investigator could develop the case to its logical conclusion. For several months after the system was installed, the machines ran twenty-four hours a day; they are still proving useful as a means of determining the unidentifiability of some remains and the nonrecoverability of certain casualties.

The use of mechanical means to effect initial associations is not without its limitations, for in many cases the physical characteristics of unidentified remains have been obscured or destroyed at the time of a violent battlefield death. The amount of information that can be code-punched is often negligible, with the result that, when the clues to identity are meager, we must still fall back on the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the trained investigator in developing circumstantial evidence.

What is the status today of our program for the return of the dead from Korea? I am happy to report that practically all of those whose remains have been recovered and identified have been returned to their homeland. Our laboratory personnel identification investigators and research people are concentrating upon the identification of the difficult Unknown cases which are at present unresolved. It is our hope that the percentage of those who must finally be designated as permanent Unknowns will be smaller than that of any previous war.

Today our teams are continuing their efforts to complete search operations in all areas now under our control. As a result of agreements made by the Armistice Commission, teams have searched the southern half of the demilitarized zone between our present front line and the hostile front line. An article is contained in the Cease-Fire Agreements where-by both sides are to be given permission to recover their dead from places of known burial in territories held by the other side. We have trained teams available to conduct this operation in North Korea at such time as administrative arrangements may be concluded by the Armistice Commission. We are exceedingly anxious to recover our honored dead from the temporary cemeteries North Korea which we established late in 1950, as well as those prisoners who died while in captivity. We cannot predict when such arrangements will be completed. We have no indication at this time whether or not we shall ever be permitted to conduct detailed search operations in those North Korean areas where many of our gallant soldiers are reported as missing, but every possible action is being taken by our Government to enable us successfully to complete this return program.

Colonel Martz, Chief of the Memorial Division, Office of The Quartermaster General since July 1953, commanded the American Graves Registration Service Group with Headquarters at Kokura, Japan, during two and one-half years of the Korean Conflict. Innovations in Graves Registration procedures, never before attempted during hostilities, were effected under his guidance. he tells how battlefield interments were eliminated and battle casualties sent home within thirty days of their deaths.

Return To: [50th Anniversary Korean War Page](#) [Mortuary Affairs History Page](#)

4331

Return To: Quartermaster History Page	
Quartermaster Foundation Page	
Quartermaster Museum Page	Quartermaster Homepage