



F9 Next of Kin Correspondence: Additional Dental Evidence Aiding in the Identification of Korean War Remains

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After attending this presentation, attendees will appreciate the utilization of additional evidence to substantiate the identification of Korean War remains.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by reminding all scientists that all information gained, no matter how minimal or when obtained, may in the future help to substantiate an identification.

The mission of the Joint POW/MIA Command (JPAC) is to conduct global search, recovery, and laboratory operations to identify unaccounted-for Americans from past conflicts in order to support the Department of Defense's personnel accounting efforts. Of the approximately 1,900 sets of remains identified by the JPAC, 224 are from the Korean War. In recent years, the proportion of identifications from the Korean War has increased and comprised 42% of all JPAC identifications from the last three years.¹

Following the end of the Korean War, Operation Glory (July-November 1954), an agreement between the United Nations and the Communist Forces (People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)) was conducted and led to the exchange of war remains. The United Nations (UN) transferred all suspected American remains to the U.S. Army's Central Identification Unit (CIU) in Kokura, Japan, for analysis. At the CIU, the remains were examined by Graves Registration identification specialists and anthropologists. All remains declared by the CIU and approved by a military review board as unidentifiable were transferred to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (The Punchbowl) in Hawaii and interred. Over 400 sets of unknown Korean War remains were buried at the Punchbowl.

During the Korean War, the Office of the Quartermaster General's (OQMG) Graves Registration (GRREG) was responsible for the recovery, processing, identifying, and repatriation of remains. The strong commitment of the Graves Registration Service (GRS) to identify remains is reflected by their persistence to obtain additional information, specifically requests for additional dental and medical records/information from military health facilities and next of kin. If a response was not received in a timely manner, a follow-up letter was sent.

The OQMG written request resulted in a range of responses from family members to include medical/dental histories, civilian health records/radiographs, contact information for civilian health care providers, photographs, and general descriptions of their son. While the information obtained from family member replies were not all substantive, all additional evidence was considered while writing the forensic odontology reports. It is also important to note that the assemblage of dental/medical records during this time period was not an easy task, as health care providers were not required to keep their records for an extended period of time and duplication of records would have to be performed manually.

This presentation will provide examples of additional dental evidence provided by family members and utilization of this information to substantiate forensic odontology reports.

Reference:

1. Ah Sam, FY Identifications as of 2013 02 14
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Joint POW/MIA Command (JPAC), Odontology, Additional Dental Evidence