



A58 The Identification of United States Casualties by the Central Identification Unit in Kokura, Japan

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand how the United States military made identifications of war casualties before the development of DNA-based methods.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by examining how certain we can be regarding the historical identification of United States war casualties.

On March 23, 1951, the USS *General George M. Randall* arrived in Oakland, CA, carrying the remains of 57 United States servicemembers who had died in the Korean theater. Of these, seven were recent casualties whose remains went directly from the hospital to the mortuary. The others had been buried the previous fall in temporary cemeteries in South Korea prior to their exhumation and forensic identification. In every previous American conflict, casualties had been buried near where they fell. After both world wars, remains were exhumed and identified, then either repatriated to the United States or reburied overseas, depending upon family preference. But in the fall of 1950, the United States military decided to repatriate all remains to the United States while the conflict was still ongoing. This policy is still in place, and the *General Randall* was unfortunately only the first of many transports to come. By the date of its arrival in California, more than 17,000 United States servicemembers had died in Korea, and the last regular shipment of remains home was in 1956.

As part of an ongoing study, the means used to identify more than 600 casualties between 1951 and 1956 have been tabulated. Throughout this period, all remains of casualties who did not die under direct medical supervision were processed by the United States Army Central Identification Unit (CIU) at Camp Kokura, Japan. Identifications relied upon dental and anthropological analyses, personal effects, and other circumstantial evidence, and, when available, fingerprints (which were sent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for comparison with their dataset of service members). One of the individuals on the *General Randall* was the fifth case processed by the CIU, on January 29. His remains were identified on February 22 based on his identification tag, and the determination that the dental status, height, and hair color of the remains all agreed with his personnel records; confirmation of a fingerprint match was received from the FBI on March 9.

Of the casualties in this sample, 408 were identified in 1951, and this subsample was the focus of analysis. These identifications were largely based on one-to-one comparison: 306/408 were received with name associations (254 based on identification tags, 52 based on personal effects, other identification media, or witness statements), and the remains were compared with a single individual's antemortem records to confirm the identification. When possible, fingerprints were used to make positive identifications, and the FBI confirmed the identifications of 92/306. For the 102 without name associations, or Unknowns, larger comparisons based on recovery date and location were generally necessary, and 74/102 were confirmed by the FBI.

Every identification memo addressed the dental remains, even if just to say (in nine cases) that dental comparison was not feasible because either dental remains or antemortem records were absent. Forty-seven cases were judged "extremely favorable" and 53 "very favorable;" other standards were "favorable," "not unfavorable," "applicable," "very applicable," and "in agreement." When discrepancies were noted, often a dental officer wrote a memo explaining why he felt those discrepancies could be discounted.

Estimated stature was used in 395/408 identifications. In most of the others, remains were too fragmentary. In 13 cases, differences of 2"-4" between antemortem and postmortem statures were explained by growth since enlistment. Race of the remains was only addressed in 150/408 cases; this is probably because the majority of casualties in this sample were European-American, so ancestry was of little discriminative value. Similarly, age was only addressed in 170/408 cases, but for a different reason: many of the remains processed in the spring of 1950 were only semi-skeletonized, and the anthropologists at the CIU would not estimate age if they could not observe the pelvis or any epiphyses. In 25 cases, matches were made between antemortem fractures and surgical procedures documented in medical records and those observed in the remains; in six cases, statements were included explaining why it was reasonable that a documented fracture was no longer observable.

Military Casualties, Biological Profile, Dental Identification