



Missing In America Project

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After Action Report La Grande Oregon August 7, 2017

On 21 June, 2016, I contacted Kevin Loveland, Loveland Funeral Chapel, La Grande, Oregon, regarding possibility of locating any unclaimed military cremains at his mortuary. He agreed to check those cremains in his possession and with the assistance of his employee, Ian Murphy, he discovered seven cremains which appeared to be those of US military veterans. I began searching for MIAP officials located nearby and called Bud Thieme, from MIAP. He agreed to come to La Grande to come in October to talk with me about the procedures for identifying veteran cremains.

On 1 August, 2016, as part of the Patriot Guard Riders, I participated in the escort of the cremains of a Civil War Union soldier, Jewett Williams, from Pendleton, Oregon to Ontario, Oregon, enroute to a final resting place in Maine. This event inspired me to move further in seeking to find unclaimed cremains of veterans in local mortuaries. I presented the project to my American Legion Riders at their September meeting as a possible project. They accepted the challenge. I then enlisted the assistance of Doran Hopkins, a retired US Air Force Colonel to work with us in our research of documents found in local mortuaries.

After Bud Thieme's visit on 3 October, Doran and I searched the seven sets of documents of the deceased veterans located at Lovelands. We were contacted by Charlie Warthing, MIAP trainer in Virginia, and via telecon, we were taken through the procedures of determining eligibility of our veterans and scheduling their interment. We also spent considerable time attempting to learn the SOP.

We discovered that two of our veterans were not eligible for VA burial benefits, due to other than honorable discharge and for serving time incarcerated in Florida.

We arranged for interment in Willamette National Cemetery, in Portland, OR, on 4 August, 2017. While we were waiting and setting up the transportation and escort, Loveland Funeral Chapel introduced another veteran's cremains into the mix. They had contacted the scheduling/eligibility office and had the DD-214 on file at WNC. We agreed to include interment of the 6th veteran at our scheduled time.

I was contacted by Chris Hawes, from MIAP, to offer assistance. He introduced me to Crystal Purdy, of Lincoln Memorial Funeral Home, who offered assistance in the arrangements for military honors, proper arrangement of the shelter at WNC, proper urns, a white dove release, lunch after the service, and escort inside the national cemetery grounds. Her coordination proved to be invaluable, as was our experience with Loveland Funeral Chapel, in La Grande.

We have the basics now and will continue the search for unclaimed veteran remains in our geographic area.

Respectfully submitted,
Lonnie Myers, MIAP Volunteer