

April 27, 2012 - Eulogy

12 forgotten veterans have made the long journey here today

Of our 12 unclaimed cremated remains - As a veteran you served your country through a war, or through peacetime. You expected to receive a military burial, recognition by our government of your commitment to our country. You expected to have honor and respect paid to you as a result of your service to our great country. Instead, you remain in the custodial care of a dedicated funeral director – awaiting a day such as this.

The mission of the Veteran Recovery Program is to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed cremated remains of veterans through the joint efforts of private, state and federal organizations. These forgotten veterans have served our country in War and in peacetime and, as such, deserve to be buried with honor and respect.

So, in keeping with the military's finest tradition of never leaving a soldier behind - Today we inter 12 forgotten veterans – these veterans without families – but today, ALL of us here are their family.

2 of these veterans served in Vietnam.

4 of these veterans served in the Korean war.

7 of these veterans served in the US Army during WWII.

Very little is known about these forgotten veterans. What we do know is that at a time when the world was engulfed in war these men stepped up and offered to sacrifice their all-in service to their country.

We do know that for some of these men life was an amazing rollercoaster of experiences. A World War – a depression – another World War then living to see their sons and grandsons off to wars in Korea and Vietnam.

A wise old woman once told me that “When a man dies – it’s like a library burns” – The deceased takes with him all his life experiences – shared and unshared. All too often the books that could have been written about one’s life – never got written. Experiences and lessons lost forever.

For many of these veterans, as young boys the horse and buggy was still a common site on most streets – but as men they were witness to the unspeakable horrors of war and then later on in a life well lived they saw men in space and America put a man on the moon – what a life experience they had.

We know that after their service they would have returned to their homes facing an uncertain future. History tells us that many would have married - raising a generation of men and women that would be a testament to their legacy. We here today can attest to the grit and determination of these men who toiled and labored to make America into the greatest country the world has ever seen. These WWII vets fought so that there would never have to be any more wars – that somehow the world would find peace. Sadly, some of the veterans present here today – are the sons and grandsons of their generation – they fought in fought in Korea and Vietnam.

We do not know the circumstances that led these heroes to be with us today. We make no judgments. The reasons can be complex and not fully understood by many. But we – the Patriot Guard Riders – are here today to honor these men – to be standing here as their family. We do it because it’s the right thing to do.

Today we honor 12 veterans who will no longer be held in the dark. Veterans that will no longer be kept in custodial care within a funeral home. We have brought them out to the light and they will have their honorable interments that they have been denied for so long. These veterans will be laid to rest in their rightful place, with full military honors.

- PFC Forrest C. Davis Jr, US Army, Vietnam, 10 Years Custodial Care
- LCpl Carl A. French, US Marine Corps, Vietnam, 9 Years Custodial Care
- Cpl Leonard J. Smaczniak, US Army, Korea, 10 Years Custodial Care
- A1C John V. Monkhouse, US Air Force, Korea, 12 Years Custodial Care
- Sgt Vincent Scappator, US Army, Korea, 28 Years Custodial Care
- Phom1PO. Jack Lewis, US Navy, WWII/Korea, 11 Years Custodial Care
- Pvt Jessie J. Baity Jr, US Army, WWII, 10 Years Custodial Care
- Tec 5 Edwin J. Koch Jr, US Army, WWII, 11 Years Custodial Care
- Cpl Chester J. Lucki, US Army, WWII, 9 Years Custodial Care
- PFC Theodore E. Rothaug, US Army, WWII, 10 Years Custodial Care

The Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity with the Armed Forces of the United States, distinguishes himself by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight. The performance of the act of heroism must be evidenced by voluntary action above and beyond the call of duty. The extraordinary achievement must have resulted in an accomplishment so exceptional and outstanding as to clearly set the individual apart from his comrades or from other persons in similar circumstances. Awards will be made only to recognize single acts of heroism or extraordinary achievement.

SSgt William Vogel, US Army Air Corps,
WWII, Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal, 9 Years Custodial Care

Sgt Gerald W. Zdarsky, US Army Air Corps, WWII,
Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal, 10 Years Custodial Care

Presentation of Flags to those in attendance.

Closing prayer by Chaplain Concluding ceremonies.