



POW/MIA Update

by Marty O'Brien

POW/MIA UPDATE

On March 30, President Lou Dechert attended a meeting in Washington, D.C., hosted by Mr. Robert Newberry, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for POW/MIA Affairs. Others present were representatives from POW/MIA family and veteran groups.

Hot topics included personnel appointments, the current shortfall in the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) budget for fiscal year 2006, and a potential reduction in budget for FY 2007. Colonel George Gagnon, USAF, was named the Principal Director of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO).

On April 25, President George W. Bush announced his intention to designate retired USAF General Robert H. Foglesong of West Virginia to be Co-Chairman of the United States-Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIA. As of this writing, the appointment of a permanent DASD for POW/MIA Affairs remains pending.

According to a July 13, 2005 DPMO report, the total number of remains that had not been accounted for totaled 8,114. Still a long way to go. Meanwhile, the families wait!

CPL HENRY D. CONNELL IS BURIED WITH HONORS

Joe Kalesnik, treasurer of Chapter 187, Western Massachusetts 2000 Chapter, reported that the remains of Corporal Connell, Hampden, MA, were interred with full military honors on May 13 at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Springfield. The journey home took 55 years.

CPL Connell's remains were identified after a decades-long Army recovery and forensic effort. CPL Connell was a member of Co L, 3d Bn, 8th Cav Regt, 1st Cav Div. He was seriously wounded on September 2, 1950.

At dusk on November 1, 1950, two Chinese divisions launched a surprise assault on two battalions of the 8th Cavalry and one ROK regiment. When the battle was over, in addition to ROK casualties, some 1,000 men of the 8th Cavalry were killed and some 400 were captured. On November 2, 1950, 17-year-old Corporal Connell was listed as MIA and later presumed dead.

PLACE OF HONOR

On April 29, "Tiger Survivor" Wilbert "Shorty" Estabrook, who now resides in San Antonio, Texas, rode in a place of honor in the city's annual Fiesta Parade. More than one half million people lined the parade route. Every branch of service was represented in the parade. Many other units participated, including Alamo re-enactors, ROTC units and a number of bugle and drum corps.

San Antonio is a great "veteran" town, with Lackland AFB; Brooke Army Medical Center; Fort Sam Houston; Randolph AFB and Kelly Field nearby.

HIERARCHY OF WHEELS

The following item comes to us via courtesy of Jack Chapman, president of the Korean War Ex-POW Association. Jack said that its

origin is unknown to him, but that it originated at Kanggye, a city located in central Korea, about 20 miles south of the Yalu River.

The city was the site of the first POW indoctrination center of the political department of the Chinese Army. Some 50 years later, the item was published in the *Saturday Evening Post*:

"Do you remember when the Chinese would assemble us and the "high commanders" would harangue us? We would huddle in the freezing cold and listen to speeches that were sometimes three hours long or more, counting the pauses for translation from Chinese into English.

Remember how we learned to tell how long a man would speak by the way he was dressed? If he wore a fur cap with a leather bill, he was just a little wheel and wouldn't talk very long. "If he wore a fur cap with a leather bill and had a wrist watch and a fountain pen, he was a medium-sized wheel and might speak for an hour or two.

If he wore a fur cap with a leather bill, a leather jacket, had a wrist watch, a fountain pen and if he smoked tailor-made cigarettes and had a small boy bring him hot tea as he talked, he was a big wheel, probably straight out of Peking, and we might have to huddle there in the cold the better part of a day."

IN ENEMY HANDS - TWICE [CONTINUED]

In addition to military prisoners of war in Korea, several civilian internees had been captured and imprisoned more than once:

Nell Dyer, of Arkansas, was a Methodist missionary who went to Korea in 1927 to teach. In the late 1930s, as war clouds loomed in Asia, she went to the Philippines only to be captured by the Japanese there and interned for three and a half years. After that experience, she returned to Korea to teach school in Kaesong, only to be arrested by the North Korean secret police shortly after the 1950 invasion.

She was taken North with other detainees and eventually her group joined the infamous "Death March" with a group of American POW. She was on hand when the leader of their captors, a North Korean major dubbed "The Tiger" by the POW, murdered Lt. Cordus H. Thornton, of Longview, Texas, in cold blood.

Despite being treated harshly while interned, Nell, who survived her captivity, was repatriated in the spring of 1953, and lived until the ripe old age of 97.

Ernst Kisch, a native of Vienna, Austria, spent time in both Buchenwald and Dachau. After the war, he joined the Methodist Mission in China. When the Communists took over China, he went to the United States and worked as an orderly in a NYC hospital. The US refused to give him immigration status, so he went to Korea and joined the Methodist Mission at Kaesong.

Dr. Kisch also was a witness to the many cruelties visited upon the POW on the death march and in the camps. In poor health, he died at Andong, North Korea, on June 28, 1951, just one year after his capture at Kaesong.

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