



# POW/MIA Update

by Marty O'Brien

## Army Board Considers USFKVO Resolution

On June 6, 2005, LTC William H. Johnson, Chief of the Army's Military Awards Branch, informed President Louis Dechert that the US Federation of Korea Veterans Organizations' recommendation of April 28, 2005, to upgrade the Distinguished Service Cross awarded to Chaplain Emil J. Kapaun in recognition of his extraordinary heroism during the Korean War to a posthumous award of the Medal of Honor, has been received and has been forwarded to the Senior Army Decorations Board for consideration.

Their decision will be referred to Department of the Army leadership for a final decision.

## KWVA Turns Out To Honor Fallen Hero

On May 31, 2005, at Dallas, Texas, Air Force Captain Troy "Gordie" Cope, 4th Fighter Wing, was finally laid to rest more than 50 years after his F-86 Sabre jet fighter was downed over China during the Korean War. The KWVA was well represented.

Attending were National President Louis T. Dechert; 17 members from General Walton H. Walker Chapter #215 (Arlington-Ft. Worth); 18 members from Sam Johnson Chapter #270 (Richardson-Dallas); Jay Zo, from the Korean Community, who represented the Dallas Cultural Foundation; and a number of family members. About 80 people attended services at Hunters Glen Baptist Church in Plano, TX.

A bagpiper, color guard and honor guard accompanied the horse-drawn caisson that carried Captain Cope to his final resting place at the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery.

In 1995, a US businessman spotted Cope's name on a dog tag on display in a military museum in the Yalu River city of Dandong, China. During a search of Russia's Podolsk military archives in 1999 by Pentagon analysts, documents describing Captain Cope's downing on September 16, 1952 were discovered. In May 2004, they were successful in recovering remains, which were identified in February 2005. There have been other recoveries.

On May 24, 2005, the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced that specialists from several Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) came out of North Korea with an unknown number of remains of men lost in two major battles there in November-December 1950; to date, two of them have been identified.

One was CPL John O. Strom, of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, a member of the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, who was reported missing in the early days of November 1950 near Unsan. The other was PFC Lowell W. Bellar of Gray, Indiana, a member of Company M, 31st Infantry Regiment, who was killed on December 1, 1950 near Hagaru; he was buried on July 15, the date of his birth in 1931.

## Recovery Operations Shut Down

In late May, after 10 consecutive years of joint operations in North Korea, the Pentagon abruptly suspended all operations there, accusing the North Koreans of creating an atmosphere of danger to the personnel assigned to the recovery teams. The decision came at a time of rising tensions with the North Korean government.

Politics or no politics, former POW Nick Nishimoto and other Korean War veterans in Honolulu continue to meet the repatriated remains of our Korean War dead as they arrive in Hawaii and honor them in ceremonies at Hickam AFB. The last ceremony was on June 24. On April 6, Nick was presented with a plaque by MG W. Montague Winfield, the JPAC Commander at the time, for his remarkable record of meeting all the remains flown to Hawaii since the repatriation program began in 1996.

General Winfield said of Nick, "He is a superb example of selflessness, and is an inspiration to our country. He's been a blessing to the American people."

## New Purple Heart Bill HR 2389

This bill was introduced into the House of Representatives on May 16, 2005 by the Honorable Bob Filner of California. Known as the "Honor our Fallen Prisoner of War Act," the bill would amend Title 10, United States Code, to provide for the Purple Heart to be awarded to prisoners of war who die in captivity under circumstances not otherwise established for eligibility for the Purple Heart. The bill would authorize the award of the Purple Heart to all members of the Armed Forces who, on or after December 7, 1941, died, or will die, from freezing, starvation, prolonged exposure, torture, and other hostile acts by an enemy.

Rick and Brenda Morgan Tavares of Campo, California and Wilbert "Shorty" Estabrook of Murrieta, California, are the movers and shakers behind this bill. Brenda's uncle, CPL Melvin Morgan died of starvation and beatings in 1950 at the age of 20 in Korea, and "Tiger Survivor" Shorty survived a death march and three years in a prison camp. For more information, contact Shorty at (951) 600-7222 or [tigersurvivors@comcast.net](mailto:tigersurvivors@comcast.net)

## Veterans Radio [www.Veteransradio.Net]

On June 26, Historian LTC William Latham and Author Dr. Lewis Carlson presented Part 2 of their excellent series of discussions on the Korean War POW experience, this time focusing on irresponsible charges made by Eugene Kinkead in his book, *In Every War But One*, which accused the American POW of a host of charges without offering any substantive evidence to support most of them. Part 3 of the series is scheduled to air on September 4 and will focus on life for the POW after repatriation.

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