With this issue we welcome our new POW/MIA correspondent, Bruce Cabana. We’ll let him introduce himself:

My name is Bruce Cabana and I am attempting to fill the large void left by Marty O’Brien regarding Korean War POW/MIA issues. I am humbled, honored, and privileged to be able to serve in this role for the short term. I look forwarded to meeting, speaking, and working with so many of you in future endeavors.

Please feel free to contact me regarding issues or news surrounding Korean War POW/MIA issues. This is a long journey, and I have large shoes to fill. We can’t rest until all the Korean War (and all other wars) POW/MIAs are accounted for.

Until They All Come Home,
Respectfully,
/s/ Bruce A. Cabana
10 Lincoln Ave., Glens Falls, NY 12801
(518) 812-0138, bruce.cabana@gmail.com

Fallen Heroes

In recent months, there have been a number of remains identified and returned to the United States. On April 11th there was a ceremony at Hickam Air Force Base to honor remains believed to be those of six U.S. service members lost during the Korean War. The remains were turned over by North Korean officials to a U.S. delegation earlier in the week. Following the ceremony, the remains [were] transported to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command at Hickam to undergo forensic identification.

On April 12th the United Nations Command hosted a Repatriation Ceremony for the servicemen. Full military honors were given to them. This came from an invitation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson and former Secretary of Veteran’s Affairs Anthony Principi headed the delegation and accompanied the Fallen Heroes back to Seoul. Their primary mission to North Korea is to facilitate the return of a still undetermined number of Fallen Heroes.

Cpl. Clarence R. Becker


On Dec. 1, 1950, Becker went missing in action when the convoy of trucks in which he was riding was ambushed south of Kunuri, North Korea. He was captured and taken prisoner. U.S. servicemen who were held in captivity with Becker said he died in the North Korean Pyoktong POW Camp 5 around May 1951 from malnutrition and disease. He was buried near the camp.

Following the Armistice, the Chinese Army exhumed remains from several POW camp cemeteries and repatriated them in 1954 to the United Nations forces during Operation Glory. Becker’s remains could not be identified at the time and were subsequently buried as unknown remains at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific—the Punch Bowl—in Hawaii.

In 2005, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) reexamined Korean War-era documents relating to unknowns buried at the Punch Bowl, which suggested that some of these remains might be identifiable. Later that year, JPAC exhumed a grave there believed to be associated with Becker.

Cpl. Pastor Balanon, Jr.

On April 30th the Department of Defense POW/MIA Personnel Office announced the identification and return of Cpl. Pastor Balanon, Jr., U.S. Army, of San Francisco, Calif. Representatives from the Army met with Balanon’s next-of-kin to explain the recovery and identification process and to coordinate interment with military honors on behalf of the Secretary of the Army.

In late October 1950, Balanon was assigned to L Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Calvary Regiment, then engaging enemy forces south of Unsan, North Korea, near a bend in the Kuryong River known as the Camel’s Head. Chinese communist forces attacked the 8th Regiment’s positions on Nov. 1, 1950, forcing a withdrawal to the south, where they were surrounded by the enemy. The remaining survivors in the 3rd Battalion attempted to escape a few days later, but Balanon was declared missing in action on Nov. 2, 1950 in the vicinity of Unsan County.

In 2001, a joint U.S.-North Korean team, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), excavated a burial site in Kujang County, south of Unsan County. A North Korean citizen living near the site told the team that the remains were relocated to Kujang after they were discovered elsewhere during a construction project. The battle area was about one kilometer north of the secondary burial site.

Cpl. Balanon was buried on May 3rd in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C.

Sgt. Frank Bunchuk

Rose Waters’ brother, Sgt. Frank Bunchuk, was just 19 years old when he was deployed overseas to battle in North Korea. Only months later, in November 1950, Bunchuk was listed as Missing in Action.

In March, Waters received a phone call that her brother’s remains had been found, complete with a DNA match. Rose and her daughter, Jeanette, had taken part in the military’s DNA databank years earlier, in hopes that this day would come.

On April 20th, military personnel presented the family with full documentation of their findings.

Bunchuk’s remains were actually found back in 2002 by a Korean farmer. The farmer discovered a mass grave with the remains of three bodies on his property. U.S. teams recovered the remains along with other items and sent them to be identified at a lab in Hawaii.

It was a day Rose Waters never imagined would happen. Now she can finally have closure for the mystery surrounding her only sibling.

“It just seems impossible. I keep saying after 57 years I can’t
believe it,” says Waters.

Sgt. Bunchuk will be laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors. The ceremony could take place sometime in August or September.

POW/MIA Initiatives

SEOU – South Korea – YON – Yonhap News Agency of Korea

April 18, 2007

The Defense Ministry is considering sending a fact-finding mission to Russia to confirm reports that thousands of South Korean prisoners of war (POWs) were taken to the Soviet Union during the 1950-53 Korean War, a ministry official said Tuesday. Several media outlets reported last Friday, citing recently declassified U.S. Defense Department documents drawn up in 1993 that the POWs were taken to 300-400 concentration camps in the Soviet Union and were not repatriated after the end of the Korean War in 1953. The Defense Ministry initially dismissed the reports, citing no evidence. “The government decided to thoroughly examine whether the U.S. document is true and work out aggressive countermeasures, if so,” the official said, requesting anonymity. He said the government will convene a working-level meeting of officials with related government offices, including the ministries of defense, unification, foreign affairs as well as the prime minister’s office, on Tuesday to discuss ways to confirm the report.

Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC)

Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) teams departed Hawaii late March for missions in the Republic of Korea to investigate cases of unaccounted -for service members from the Korean War.

Two JPAC teams, consisting of nine personnel, investigated multiple sites in hopes to find evidence that could assist in the future recovery of missing Americans. During the 32 day deployment, the teams investigated 23 aircraft losses and one ground loss. One team investigated 13 sites in northern Korea and Seoul, while the other team investigated 11 sites in the south of the country.

This was the first of three JPAC missions to the Republic of Korea scheduled for 2007.

2007 Family Update/Government Briefing Schedules

Family members of missing-in-action service personnel are invited to attend informational meetings held nearly every month in major metropolitan areas across the country. These sessions provide specific information to family members about their loved one’s cases. The dates and locations for this year’s family updates are:

- Jan. 20—Fort Worth, Texas
- Feb. 24—Tampa, Fla.
- March 24—Sacramento, Calif.
- Apr. 21—Boston, Mass.
- May 19—Cheyenne, Wyo.
- July 21—Cincinnati, Ohio
- Aug. 18—Kansas City, Mo.
- Nov. 17—Phoenix, Ariz.

In addition to family updates, annual government briefings are held in the Washington D.C. area for Vietnam War, and Korean and Cold War family members.

The dates for this year’s annual government briefings are:

Oct. 18-20—Korean and Cold War – Washington, DC

For more information on the family updates and government briefings, call your respective Service Casualty Office. The contact information is:

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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Air Force</td>
<td>1-800-531-5501</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Army</td>
<td>1-800-892-2490</td>
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<td>U.S. Marine Corps</td>
<td>1-800-847-1597</td>
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<td>U.S. Navy</td>
<td>1-800-443-9298</td>
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<td>U.S. Department of State</td>
<td>202-647-5470</td>
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Letters From Korea

You will notice that the book review in this issue (see p. 17) deals with letters between a husband and wife during the Korean War. Coincidentally, we begin a new serialization this time that deals with the same subject, on a broader scale.

In the “Recon Missions” section of the May/June 2005 The Graybeards (p. 63), Luke Macauley asked for input from KWVA members re letters written/ received by American service-men/women in Korea. He was writing his Master’s thesis in American Studies at the University of Glasgow [Scotland] at the time. KWVA members were generous in their response. He has been equally so in his response to us.

Mr. Macauley completed his thesis in September 2005. He has consented graciously to share it with us in The Graybeards. It is far too long to include in one issue. So, we will spread it out over the next few issues. It begins on page 64.

Bear in mind that this is an academic work. Therefore, it includes footnotes, bibliography, etc. I have kept them in our version to give readers an idea of who contributed to Mr. Macauley’s work, what sources he used in his research, etc. I have included the bibliography for the same reason. Readers have the option of skipping right by them.

Some readers might find portions of the text disturbing. But, the author’s analyses provide us with a keen insight into why soldiers wrote...

Enjoy it.