

DPMO White Paper Punch Bowl 239

A private researcher, reporter and author, Mr. Larry Jolidon, compiled 239 names which he believes may be Korean War unaccounted-for servicemen whose remains can be identified in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific [NMCP], also referred to as the Punch Bowl. Mr. Jolidon took two documents that were in the public domain, compared the names in them, and found 239 names common to both. He offered a tentative conclusion-that the 239 were possibly buried as Unknowns in the Punch Bowl. Records from the U.S. Army Mortuary in Kokura, Japan, indicate otherwise. This paper examines these documents and explains the final disposition on the remains associated with the 239 names cited by Mr. Jolidon.

First document: the PMKOR - Personnel Missing, Korea - contains the names of 8,200 servicemen lost during the Korean War. Forty of the PMKOR names are resolved cases, but are retained for historical purposes. The other 8,160 are indeed missing men, whether killed in action [KIA], missing in action [MIA], dead as prisoners of war [POW], or non-battle deaths [NBD].

Second document: the "Alphabetical Roster of Evac's Received Under Operation Glory as Named Cases" contains 1,934 names derived from Chinese and North Korean transmittal forms received during Operation Glory from September through December 1954. During this period, the Chinese and North Koreans returned a total of 4,167 containers of human remains. After forensic examination, these proved to be the remains of 4,219 different individuals. Identification efforts followed. By the time the Kokura facility closed on 29 February 1956, 2,944 of the 4,219 individual sets of remains had been found to be American, and all but 421 of these were identified by name. Later, before burials occurred at the Punch Bowl NMCP in Hawaii, five more American remains were identified. This left 416 American remains returned during Operation Glory which were unidentified and buried as Unknowns in the Punch Bowl. It is important to understand that the "Alphabetical Roster" is only a transcription of information provided by the Chinese and North Koreans. To the best of our knowledge, the "Alphabetical Roster" does not represent forensic work by the Chinese and North Koreans, and it certainly does not represent work done by the U.S. Government. Only 858 of the 1,934 names associated with specific sets of American remains by the Chinese and North Koreans on the "Alphabetical Roster" proved to be correct.

This brings us to the remains associated with the 239 names cited by Mr. Jolidon. For 186, there is no possible linkage with any Unknown at the Punch Bowl NMCP. First, 176 [or 73.6 percent of the 239] were successfully identified as someone else and shipped to cemeteries throughout the United States for burial. Each of the other 10 sets of remains [4.2 percent of the 239] tells a slightly different story, as follows: five were not forwarded to the United States-of these, four were cited as non-American persons of Asiatic descent, and one as British. Two other sets of remains were, in fact, identified as being the persons named on the "Alphabetical Roster" and brought home for burial. Coincidentally, a different person of a very similar name still appears on PMKOR-a possible source of honest confusion. Two cases stand as "unconfirmed." We do not have specific information on their identification or other disposition-our records for Operation Glory are incomplete with respect to those names. But we do know that these are not among the 416 Operation Glory Unknowns found to be American and buried in the Punch Bowl NMCP. The final case, here, is of a serviceman identified by name and returned to the United States-he is one of the 40 resolved cases mentioned above which are retained on PMKOR for historical purposes.

We now move to the 53 cases associated with Unknown remains in the Punch Bowl NMCP. Each was found to be an American who could not be identified by name. They fall into two sets. For 33 [13.8 percent of the 239], forensic work done at Kokura excluded the name provided by the North Koreans-we do not know who these men are, but can say that the remains do not match the names cited, for reasons such as size, age, dentition, or race. For the other 20 [8.4 percent of the 239], there is simply not enough forensic evidence to either confirm or exclude the possibility that the "Alphabetical Roster" names associated with these remains are correct.

Summary: Of the 239 cases of Korean War unaccounted-for servicemen cited by Mr. Jolidon, fully 186 have achieved some sort of final disposition. All but three sets of these remains were determined to be individuals other than those suggested by the Chinese and North Koreans during Operation Glory. Of the remaining 53, working records show that

33 cannot be the names originally cited-altogether, we can exclude 91.6 percent of the remains from the name associations as provided by the Chinese and North Koreans. For the other 20 names there is simply not enough forensic evidence to confirm or exclude the possibility that the names offered by the North Koreans and Chinese match the associated remains.