



By Joseph Morton

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WASHINGTON — This time there were flowers, prayers and traditional military honors.

Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Arthur of Broken Bow, Neb., received a long-delayed proper burial Friday at Arlington National Cemetery.

The fallen hero was an uncle of Kaye Einspahr of Enders.

It came nearly six decades after he died as a prisoner of war in Korea, his fellow soldiers forced to leave his body behind in a makeshift grave.

Honor guard members lifted the flag from his casket Friday and presented it to his nephew, Francis Arthur. The funeral represented the end of a prolonged effort by Francis Arthur, the rest of the family and the military to identify Patrick Arthur's remains from among boxes of mixed remains returned by North Korea in the 1990s.

When word came late last year of a DNA match, Francis Arthur was stunned.

"You could've knocked me off my chair," Francis said. "I had given up hope."

The funeral party Friday wasn't massive — a couple of dozen relatives, friends and people who had never met Patrick Arthur. They talked about the inspiring story of a humble, everyday soldier who was always focused on doing his job, now coming home to his final rest.

Patrick Arthur was decorated many times over: a Purple Heart with three oak leaf clusters, a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, more than a dozen other medals. But he was never one to brag.

"The only time there was a uniform with all his medals together with Patrick Arthur was in that casket," Francis Arthur said.

Patrick Arthur, known as "Pop" to fellow soldiers, was among hundreds captured in May 1951 and subjected to one of the most brutal forced marches imaginable. Weak and starving, their bellies burning with dysentery, they walked 500 miles. Those who faltered were shot.

His platoon sergeant, Obie Wickersham, and Sgt. Fred Liddell did their best to keep him going, but Pop died in July after the group reached a makeshift prison camp. He was 36.

"He didn't give up, but his old body did," Wickersham said Friday.

Wickersham and Liddell buried their friend in the dirt. Their captors wouldn't even allow them to say a prayer.

Friday, his mourners gathered in a chapel not far from the Tomb of the Unknowns to offer their prayers over his flag-draped casket. The priest told them that even though Patrick Arthur's remains had gone unidentified for so many years, God never forgot about him.

A light rain falling earlier in the day had cleared by the time the group made its way to the grave-site.

The priest offered some more words. A seven-member firing party delivered three rifle volleys. Francis Arthur was presented with the flag.

It was over.

Sniffing, Liddell and Wickersham patted the coffin of their buddy who fell so long ago.

“So long, Pop,” said Wickersham, who lives in Yuba City, Calif.

Fred Liddell, of Opelika, Ala., noted that the day’s honors certainly beat the hasty burial they had given their friend back in Korea.

“It’s nice to know he finally got where he deserves to be,” Liddell said. “So many people had to do so much damn work to get him here.”

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