

DPAA reaches milestone in *USS Oklahoma* identifications

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By Sgt. 1st Class Kristen Duus, DPAA

ARLINGTON, Virginia -- Only a handful of *USS Oklahoma* survivors remain who can remember the attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941. The *USS Oklahoma*, moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, was sunk by Japanese aircraft during the attack. A total of 429 crewmen aboard the *USS Oklahoma* were killed in the early morning hours of Dec. 7, 1941, after the ship quickly capsized from the numerous torpedo hits.

From December 1941 through June 1944, Navy personnel recovered the remains of those who perished, interring them in the Halawa and Nu'uauu Cemeteries in Hawaii.

The remains were disinterred by the American Graves Registration Service from the two cemeteries in September 1947, and transferred to the Central Identification Laboratory at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. Only 35 men were identified out of the 429 killed. Nearly 400 unidentified remains were buried as Unknowns in 46 plots at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the Punchbowl, in Honolulu.

In 2003, as a result of the research efforts of Pearl Harbor survivor Ray Emory, a single casket associated with the *USS Oklahoma* loss was disinterred from the Punchbowl. Anthropological and DNA evidence have shown that remains are extremely commingled, with at least 95 individuals represented in the first disinterred casket based on mitochondrial DNA results, said Dr. Carrie Brown, DPAA Forensic Anthropologist and *USS Oklahoma* Team Lead. Of those, five were initially identified following the disinterment: Fireman 2nd Class Lawrence A. Boxrucker, of Dorchester, Wisconsin; Fireman 3rd Class Gerald G. Lehman, of Hancock, Michigan; Machinist's Mate 1st Class Charles H. Swanson, of Maywood, California; and Ens. Irvin A. R. Thompson, of Hudson County, New Jersey; and Ens. Eldon P. Wyman, of Portland, Oregon.

In 2015, as part of the *USS Oklahoma* Project, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, through a partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, exhumed all of the unknown remains from the *USS Oklahoma*, and began the lengthy identification process.

"It's an honor to participate in the disinterment process with DPAA to bring closure to the loved ones who lost their sons during the bombing at Pearl Harbor," said Jim Horton, Director of the Punchbowl. "As veterans, we understand the sacrifices that are made by the families and it's our privilege to take part in the dignified transfer for their beloved servicemen so that the families can determine the final disposition of the remains."

Now, more than two years later, DPAA has reached a milestone in their identifications. In those 46 plots laid almost 400 sets of commingled remains. Last week, DPAA made their 100th identification from the ship's casualties.

"This milestone is illustrative of our talented laboratory professionals and strong partnerships with the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System, the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department

of the Navy,” said Kelly McKeague, DPAA Director. “Most importantly, it helps resolve the uncertainties 100 families had harbored for 76 years.”

The Navy POW/MIA Branch has been heavily involved in the process from the beginning. The team maintains contact with families and relays information of recently identified personnel. Although they deliver the identification news, the branch remains humble in their part in a much bigger picture.

“An identification of an unaccounted for service member is the culmination of years of work by many hard working professionals who are dedicated to the personnel accounting mission,” said Rudy Gonzales, Navy POW/MIA Branch Head. “We have the honor and privilege of notifying families of the great news that their loved one has been recovered and identified. Through tears or kind words, the gratefulness and appreciation we witness when meeting with the families to deliver this news cannot be overstated.”

Following each disinterment, recovered remains were sent to the DPAA laboratory in Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, for analysis.

“The first step is to take an anthropological inventory of each casket,” said Brown. “We could not do any identifications if we do not take inventory of everything. This also includes taking measurements, collecting biological data and nominating bones for DNA sampling.”

From that initial phase, which took nearly a year to complete, almost 13,000 skeletal elements were inventoried, said Brown.

The lab has collected and submitted just under 5,000 samples to the Armed Forces Medical Examiner’s Armed Forces DNA Operations (AFMES-DO), specifically the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory for DNA processing. AFMES-DO is the sole Department of Defense DNA testing laboratory tasked with assisting current and past conflicts human identification efforts.

“Specimens associated with the *USS Oklahoma*, although presenting challenges during the initial preparation for DNA recovery, provided good quality DNA,” said Dr. Timothy McMahon, Director of DoD DNA Operations.” AFMES-DO will compare the DNA analysis results to a database of family reference samples associated with missing service members from the *USS Oklahoma* to determine who that unknown sequence may be consistent with.”

In partnership with the DNA lab, Brown said they have DNA family reference samples for 85% of the unaccounted for individuals. DNA, dental analysis, and anthropological analysis are all factors in completing an identification.

The first group of identifications came while disinterments at the Punchbowl were still progressing. Among the first to be identified was Navy Ensign Lewis B. Pride, Jr., 23, of Madisonville, Kentucky. Pride was identified through dental comparisons and circumstantial evidence. Also identified in September 2015 were Warrant Officer Machinist Daryl H. Goggin, 34, of Everett, Washington; Chief Petty Officer Duff Gordon, 52, of Hudson, Wisconsin; Chief Petty Officer Albert E. Hayden, 44, of Mechanicsville, Maryland; Petty Officer 1st Class Vernon T. Luke, 43, of Green Bay, Wisconsin; Seaman 2nd Class Dale F. Pearce, 21, of Dennis, Kansas; and Ensign Lewis S. Stockdale, 27, of Anaconda, Montana.

Though the attacks on the *USS Oklahoma* happened 76 years ago, the effects on family members are still felt nationwide. Service members came from all walks of life, much like service members today. Their hometowns spanned from California to New Hampshire, and Washington to Florida. Fireman 3rd Class John H. Lindsley, 22, was born in the Philippines and raised in Waukegan, Illinois. He was buried Oct. 25, 2016, in Arlington National Cemetery.

Some service members had already had long-standing careers in the military prior to their death, while others were just teenagers. Marine Corps Pvt. Vernon P. Keaton, of Lubbock, Texas, was only 18 when he was killed aboard the ship. He was identified in August 2017, through mitochondrial (mtDNA) DNA analysis, dental comparisons and anthropological analysis. Keaton was recently buried in Lula, Oklahoma.

Other casualties return to rest peacefully in the same cemetery where for decades they had only been labeled as “Unknown.” Seaman 1st Class Murry R. Cargile, 21, of Roberson, North Carolina, and Seaman 2nd Class Vernon N. Grow, 25, of Redding, California, were both reinterred at the Punchbowl, April 7, 2017, per their family’s desires.

One of the first *USS Oklahoma* identifications of Fiscal Year 2018 was Fireman 2nd Class Martin A. Gara, of Chicago, Illinois. Gara’s funeral services remain pending.

While family members still arrange for Gara’s funeral services, DPAA continues the demanding process of fulfilling our nation’s promise and identifying the additional service members of *USS Oklahoma* whose remains reside in their laboratory.

“The work in applying DNA forensic testing methods to assist with identifying missing U.S. service members to include those from the *USS Oklahoma* is a sacred and honorable mission,” said McMahon. “There are no words that can describe the feeling we get when an unknown individual is identified and returned to their loved ones.”

Navy Radioman 3rd Class Howard W. Bean, of Everett, Massachusetts was 27 when he was killed that fateful morning decades ago. This year, on Dec. 6, one day prior to the 76th anniversary of his death, he will be laid to rest with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery, where he will forever be memorialized as a hero who selflessly gave his life for his country.

Brown notes with a bit of karmic perspective that the laboratory at Offutt is in the former Martin Bomber Plant, where bombers that ended World War II were built. Now, in a historical coincidence that has come full circle, a portion of the plant has turned into the lab where identifications are being made for casualties that were killed in the attack that brought the United States into the war.

DPAA is grateful to the steadfast partnerships of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System and Navy POW/MIA Branch, who have collectively been the backbone of the *USS Oklahoma* identifications. It is through this effort that the accounting community has been able to honor the sacrifices of the *USS Oklahoma* Sailors and Marines and their families who pushed for the fullest possible accounting of their loved ones.

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF USS OKLAHOMA IDENTIFICATIONS: (Please note that in some *USS Oklahoma* identifications, the primary next of kin has yet to be notified, and therefore the names will not be released at this time.)

Radioman 2nd Class Walter H. Backman, 22, of Wilton, North Dakota

Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Cecil E. Barncord, 24, of Wilson Township, Kansas

Navy Radioman 3rd Class Howard W. Bean, 27, of Everett, Washington

[Navy Fireman 2nd Class James B. Boring, 21, of Vales Mill, Ohio](#)

Navy Mess Attendant 1st Class Ralph M. Boudreaux, 20, of New Orleans, Louisiana

Fireman 2nd Class Lawrence A. Boxrucker, of Dorchester, Wisconsin (Disinterred in 2003)

[Seaman 1st Class Murry R. Cargile, 21, of Robersonville, North Carolina](#)

Machinist's Mate 1st Class Harold F. Carney, 23, of New Diggins, Wisconsin

[Fireman 1st Class Charles Ray Casto, 20, of East Liverpool, Ohio](#)

Seaman 2nd Class Floyd Clifford, 20, of Douglas, Kansas

[Seaman 1st Class George A. Coke, 18, of Arlington, Texas](#)

Fireman 1st Class Samuel W. Crowder, 35, of Louisville, Kentucky

Storekeeper 2nd Class Glenn C. Cyriack, 20, of Pipestone County, Minnesota

[Steward's Mate 1st Class Cyril I. Dusset, 21, of New Orleans, Louisiana](#)

Storekeeper 3rd Class Wallace E. Eakes, 22, of Caney, Kansas

[Ensign John C. England, 20, of Alhambra, California](#)

[Fireman 1st Class Lawrence H. Fecho, 20, of Willow City, North Dakota](#)

Ensign William M. Finnegan, 44, of Bessmer, Michigan

[Fireman 1st Class Michael Galajdik, 25, of Joliet, Illinois](#)

Fireman 2nd Class Martin A. Gara, 20, of Chicago, Illinois

Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Harry H. Gaver, 24, of Annapolis, Maryland

Seaman 2nd Class George T. George, 26, of St. Louis, Missouri

Radioman 2nd Class Quentin J. Gifford, 22, of Mankato, Minnesota

Warrant Officer Daryl H. Goggin, 34, of Everett, Washington

Seaman 1st Class Clifford G. Goodwin, 24, of Marion Township, Missouri

[Chief Petty Officer Duff Gordon, 52, of Hudson, Wisconsin](#)

[Seaman 2nd Class Vernon N. Grow, 25, of Redding, California](#)

Shopfitter 3rd Class Francis L. Hannon, 20, of Madison County, Indiana

[Chief Petty Officer Albert E. Hayden, 44, of Mechanicsville, Maryland](#)

Seaman 2nd Class Harold L. Head, 20, of Browning, Missouri

Gunner's Mate 1st Class George Herbert, 37, of Fall River, Massachusetts

[Ensign Joseph P. Hittorff, 25, of Collingswood, New Jersey](#)

[Chief Storekeeper Herbert J. Hoard, 36, of DeSoto, Missouri](#)

[Fireman 3rd Class Kenneth L. Holm, 29, of Clarkfield, Minnesota](#)

[Fireman 3rd Class Edwin C. Hopkins, 19, of Keene, New Hampshire](#)

[Fireman 3rd Class Glaydon I.C. Iverson, 24, of Emmons, Minnesota](#)

Seaman 2nd Class Challis R. James, 18, of New Boston, Ohio

Fireman 3rd Class Kenneth L. Jayne, 26, of Patchogue, New York

Seaman 1st Class Joseph M. Johnson, 22, of Columbus, North Dakota

[Fireman 1st Class Jim H. Johnston, 23, of Wesson, Mississippi](#)

Machinist's Mate 1st Class Fred M. Jones, 31, of North Lake, Michigan

[Lt. Julian B. Jordan, 37, of Dawson, Georgia](#)

[Marine Corps Pvt. Vernon P. Keaton, 18, of Lubbock, Texas](#)

[Fireman 1st Class William H. Kennedy, 24, of Titonka, Iowa](#)

[Fireman 1st Class Elmer T. Kerestes, 22, of Holding Township, Minnesota](#)

[Coxswain Verne F. Knipp, 22, of Salida, Colorado](#)

[Musician 1st Class Elliot D. Larsen, 25, of Monroe, Utah](#)

Fireman 3rd Class Gerald G. Lehman, of Hancock, Michigan (Disinterred in 2003)

[Fireman 3rd Class John H. Lindsley, 22, Wuakegan, Illinois](#)

Fireman 3rd Class Alfred E. Livingston, of Worthington, Indiana (Disinterred in 2007)

[Petty Officer 1st Class Vernon T. Luke, 43, of Green Bay, Wisconsin](#)

Fire Controlman 2nd Class Donald R. McCloud, 21, of Wayne, West Virginia

[Machinist's Mate 1st Class Earl R. Melton, 24, of Lakewood, New Jersey](#)

Fireman 1st Class Elmer D. Nail, 23, of Kansas City, Missouri

[Fire Controlman 1st Class Paul A. Nash, 26, of Carlisle, Indiana](#)

[Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Don O. Neher, 28, of Kansas City, Missouri](#)

[Gunner's Mate 1st Class Arthur C. Neuenschwander, 33, of Fessenden, North Dakota](#)

Fireman 1st Class Frank E. Nicoles, 24, of Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Signalman 3rd Class Charles E. Nix, 26, of Danville, Illinois

Fireman 1st Class Charles R. Ogle, 20, of Goedsbery Township, Missouri

Seaman 1st Class Camillus M. O'Grady, 19, of Saline County, Kansas

Storekeeper 3rd Class Eli Olsen, 23, of Audubon, Iowa

[Seaman 2nd Class Dale F. Pearce, 21, of Dennis, Kansas](#)

[Seaman 2nd Class James N. Phipps, 24, of Rainier, Oregon](#)

Fireman 1st Class Gerald H. Pirtle, 19, of El Dorado, Kansas

[Seaman 2nd Class Rudolph V. Piskuran, 19, of Elyria, Ohio](#)

[Fire Controlman 3rd Class Robert L. Pribble, 19, of St. Petersburg, Florida](#)

[Ensign Lewis B. Pride, Jr., 23, of Madisonville, Kentucky](#)

[Seaman 1st Class Paul S. Raimond, 20, of Converse, Louisiana](#)

Water Tender 2nd Class Porter L. Rich, 27, of Lake Preston, South Dakota

Seaman 1st Class Harold W. Roesch, 25, of Rockford, Illinois

[Fireman 1st Class Walter B. Rogers, 22, of Bison, South Dakota](#)

[Yeoman 3rd Class Edmund T. Ryan, 21, of Wilbraham, Massachusetts](#)

Seaman 1st Class John E. Savidge, 20, of Elisabeth, New Jersey

[Lt. j.g. Aloysius H. Schmitt, 32, of St. Lucas, Iowa](#)

Pharmacist's Mate 1st Class John H. Schoonover, 39, of Port Edwards, Wisconsin

[Ensign Verdi D. Sederstrom, 25, of Montevideo, Minnesota](#)

Seaman 1st Class Edward F. Slapikas, 26, of Wanamie, Pennsylvania

[Water Tender 1st Class Walter H. Sollie, 37, of Myrtlewood, Alabama](#)

[Ensign Lewis S. Stockdale, 27, of Anaconda, Montana](#)

[Seaman 1st Class Milton R. Surratt, 21, of Greenville, South Carolina](#)

Machinist's Mate 1st Class Charles H. Swanson, of Maywood, California (Disinterred in 2003)

[Seaman 1st Class Robert M. Temple, 19, of Des Moines, Iowa](#)

[Fireman 1st Class Charles W. Thompson, 19, of Weaubleau, Missouri](#)

Ensign Irvin A.R. Thompson, of Hudson County, New Jersey (Disinterred in 2003)

[Ensign William M. Thompson, 21, of Summit, New Jersey](#)

[Seaman 2nd Class Lewis L. Wagoner, 20, of Douglass County, Missouri](#)

[Fireman 3rd Class Robert N. Walkowiak, 20, of Oshkosh, Wisconsin](#)

[Seaman 1st Class William E. Welch, 18, of Springfield, Ohio](#)

[Machinist's Mate 1st Class Alfred F. Wells, 32, of Syracuse, New York](#)

Fireman 2nd Class John D. Wheeler, 26, of Fort Douglas, Arkansas

Seaman 2nd Class George J. Wilcox, 19, of Byram, Mississippi

Seaman 2nd Class Frank Wood, 25, of Jackson, Ohio

Chief Water Tender Paul R. Wright, 41, of Meadville, Missouri

Ensign Eldon P. Wyman, of Portland, Oregon (Disinterred in 2003)