



ROLLING THUNDER[®], INC
CHAPTER 2 OF ILLINOIS
P.O. Box 394
Round Lake Beach, Illinois 60073



“MISSION COMPLETE”
23 MARCH 2012

U.S. Army Cpl. Chester Roper

MISSING: **U.S. Army Cpl. Chester Roper** was part of a firing battery in a unit made up of African-Americans, Battery A, 503rd Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division. In late November 1950, Roper and his unit were “overrun” by Chinese forces “deep within North Korea,” O’Brien said.

He was captured by enemy forces on Dec. 1, 1950 near Somindong, North Korea. After being held captive for weeks, Roper and others marched for five days and on Jan. 20 1951, he entered a camp near the south bank of the Yalu River near a village called Pyoktong.



But after weeks of malnutrition and exposure to the brutal winter, Roper fell ill with pneumonia, O’Brien said. He died on or about Feb. 10, 1951, and was buried by his fellow prisoners on a frozen hillside.

RECOVERY: In 1954, the United Nations and the communist governments exchanged the remains of some war dead, including those who had died in Roper’s camp. The Army was unable to attach a name to each person recovered.

Unbeknownst to his family, Roper and thousands of others were buried as unknowns at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

That is where he rested until analysts began a routine re-examination of his file, O’Brien said.

Officials were able to narrow down possibilities because Roper was one of just a few young black soldiers held in the camp, said Air Force Maj. Carie Parker, a spokeswoman for the POW/Missing Personnel Office.

Roper’s remains were exhumed and officials used dental records and an X-ray of Roper’s chest to help identify him, officials said. The X-ray, which was part of a group of X-rays discovered by military analysts in recent years, showed Roper’s clavicle, O’Brien said. Clavicle bones have unique ridges that can be used to help confirm identity, similar to fingerprints, O’Brien said. He was accounted for on Jan. 4, 2012.

SERVICES: Doc White of Rolling Thunder Chapter 2 – IL assisted with the Dignified Transfer of Remains and escort on 21 March 2012. The Chapter also rendered our respects at the Memorial Service and escorted CPL Roper to his final resting place.



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INTERMENT: U.S. Army Cpl. Chester Roper was finally laid to rest today, 60 years after the young man died in the Korean War as a prisoner of war.





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The fallen soldier was finally laid to rest near his family at Evergreen Cemetery in Evergreen Park surrounded by generations of relatives, some whom had never met the man but had learned about him through family stories.

A military honor guard stood at attention as a bugler played taps and Roper's relatives wiped away tears and received the folded American flag that rested on the brown wooden coffin.

His grave marker will be inscribed with his name and the message "Welcome home."

Despite decades of time, the ceremony brought a sense of closure to the family, comfort to his friends, warmth to his fellow Americans, and pride to his Veteran brothers and sisters.

CHAPTER COIN:



A Chapter 2, IL challenge coin was presented to each of his two nieces. Our coin symbolizes a "test of our metal" in supporting the on-going efforts to ensure the remaining 90,000 plus servicemen, servicewomen, and civilians, unaccounted for, are returned to our Country and to their loved ones.



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We will “Never Forget” U.S. Army Cpl. Chester Roper

Rolling Thunder Participants:



Doc White, Wayne Kirkpatrick, Pete Mazik, Randy Braun

Sources:

Daily Herald, Chicago, IL (Tara Garcia-Mathewson)

The Courier News – Chicago Sun Times

The Associated Press

DoD Joint Personnel Accounting Command

Library of Congress

VIDEO: <http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=news/local&id=8593335>