

COMING HOME.....

By Traveler



In our culture, funerals, wakes, and interments are not, commonly, joyous occasions. That theory dissolves, however, when a family experiences the identification and repatriation of a loved one who was listed as "Missing in Action". Grief and trepidation are typically replaced with gratitude and comfort. Such was the case with the repatriation of US Marine Corps TSgt Harry "Bud" Carlsen.



Horace (Bud) Carlsen was born on January 4, 1912 in Brookfield to James and Amalia (nee Mehalek) Carlsen. He died on November 20, 1943 during the Battle of Tarawa in the Pacific during WWII.

He enlisted in the Marine Reserves in December of 1941. He rose to the rank of Technical Sergeant and served as the Quartermaster Maintenance Chief for Company A of the 2nd Marine Divisions' 2nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion. From August through December of 1942, he participated in landing assaults against several strongly defended enemy positions in the South

Pacific including Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo, Florida, and Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands. In November of 1943, he was among the first troops to assault the heavily fortified enemy defenses of Betio Island Red Beach One, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands as part of an advance team whose mission was to establish a headquarters for tractor battalion operations.



Bud was one of 550 Marines killed in the battle whose remains were not identified or recovered. Dog tags were removed, gravesites obliterated, and records lost. TSgt Carlsen was buried on Betio, but he could not be identified among remains disinterred from the island following the war.



In 1946 his unidentified remains were moved to Hawaii's Schofield Mausoleum. 1949 his remains were reinterred at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Hawaii's Punchbowl in grave E1212. Technical Sergeant Carlsen is memorialized on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

Due to extensive research by William Niven, Rick Stone (Chief Rick Stone and Family Foundation), and Mark Noah (History Flight), the search for Bud focused on grave E1212. In 2013, previously unidentified remains from Betio were analyzed using modern forensic techniques, and TSgt Carlsen was eventually identified from among these remains.

Work by Nancy Spellman, Bud's niece, and great nephew Ed Spellman led to the exhumation of E1212 and the conclusive identification of Bud in June 2018.

Bud is survived by his nieces and nephews: Barbara Rapp, James Goodman, Richard Goodman, Jane Hilmer, and many great nieces and nephews.



On 18 Oct 2018, TSgt Bud Carlsen finally came home following 75 years listed as "Missing in Action". Rolling Thunder, Chapter 2 – Illinois (RT IL-2) participated in the Dignified Transfer at O'Hare Airport and the escort to the Glueckert Funeral Home in Arlington Heights, IL.



On Friday evening, members of RT IL-2 gathered at the funeral home to visit the family, pay our respects to TSgt Bud Carlson, and present the family with a POW/MIA Flag and a Chapter coin. The family was highly appreciative of our visitation and, RT IL-2 members were, once again, humbled by the experience.



Saturday morning was cold and dark when we assembled to flag up and ride to the funeral home to escort TSgt Carlsen to his final, and honorable, resting place at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. Seventeen Chapter 2 members braved the 29-degree temperature and were joined by seven members of Rolling Thunder, Chapter 1 – IL, members of Canaryville Veteran Riders Association, and Patriot Guard Riders.



Rolling Thunder had the honor of leading the escort of TSgt Carlsen 65 miles to Lincoln National Cemetery followed by Patriot Guard Riders and Canaryville Veteran Riders. Throughout the 2-hour ride, chills and discomfort were replaced by pride and respect as we all had time to reflect on the family's loss, their 75 years of grieving, wondering, hoping and disappointment.

As we entered the Cemetery, it was clear that each rider was sitting a little straighter, each bike seemed a little bit quieter, and each face respectfully reflected the solemn ambience of Lincoln National Cemetery.

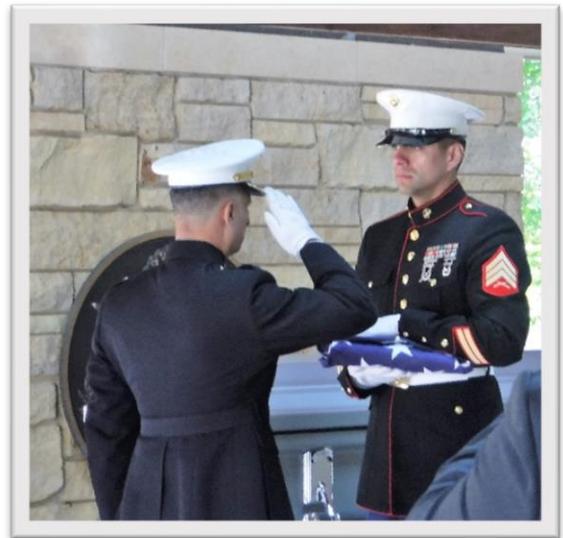


Standing shoulder to shoulder, Rolling Thunder members saluted as the Marine Corps Honor Guard transferred the casket from the hearse to the pavilion.

The Chaplain spoke to us all of TSgt Carlsen, led us in prayer, and the USMC Firing Squad executed a 21 – gun salute followed by the sounding of Taps. A wave of emotion



followed Taps as most of realized how fortunate we were to be a small part of this distinguished and honorable repatriation.



USMC TSgt Bud Carlsen is the sixth POW/MIA repatriation that our Chapter has had the honor of participating in. Without exception, each family was overwhelmed by our show of respect and honor. Bud Carlsen's family's appreciation was typified by the following message extracts:

Wayne... I wanted to take a moment to thank you from the bottom of my heart for Rolling Thunder being at my Uncle's funeral last Saturday. I wish I could have been on an overpass looking down to video this great display of honoring my Uncle back home.

Thank you again from the bottom of my heart!

Kyle and Jane Hilmer

I know that you guys were there several days...so great to meet all of you. I will NEVER forget! It was a very "High" moment in my life. It's so funny because I told my two older brothers that Bud's body would be found in our lifetimes and I think they thought I was crazy. I just knew he would make it home someday. I've made so many nice friends through what people kept saying "so sorry for your loss". I think Bud's spirit made its way home a long time ago but he was definitely smiling down on us last week! Keep up the good work!

Jane

Wayne-

On behalf of my entire family I wanted to thank you and your fellow members of the Rolling Thunder Chapter 2 of Illinois organization for your participation and support for the return of SGT Carlsen of Brookfield home to Illinois. Your spirit and personalized well wishes were incredibly appreciated by all of us. We were overwhelmed and enormously moved by the support of your group, and the genuine interest of your members who took the time to learn a little about Bud. To the all riders who joined us on the route to Lincoln National, a special thank-you, it was the ride of a lifetime for me, and I never wanted it to end.

I will proudly display the POW-MIA and American Flags you presented, and the memorial plaque of the event will hang in our den as a constant reminder of Bud's service. I will wear the POW-MIA pin on those special days when all Americans pay homage to those who served our nation.

Regards,

Ed and Vicki Spellman



Somewhere in the grand scheme of things, each of us should recognize that the efforts of Rolling Thunder, in some small way, contributed to bringing TSgt Bud Carlsen home to his family. The next time that you wonder if it's worth the effort of getting up early for a mission on a cold, damp morning, or spending your weekend free time on a mission, or giving up that favorite game on TV or that weekly gathering of friends, think about the reward for doing what we do and....NEVER FORGET!