



ROLLING THUNDER[®], INC
CHAPTER 2 OF ILLINOIS
Wauconda, Illinois



“MISSION COMPLETE”

23 OCT 2021

U.S. Army Air Corps SGT. Francis Wiemerslage

MISSING: In March 1945, Wiemerslage was assigned to the 549th Bombardment Squadron, 385th Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force, serving in Germany. He was the ball turret gunner on a B-17G Flying Fortress bomber during a bombing mission over Dresden, on March 2. Enemy fighters attacked the bomber between Berlin and Leipzig, and the plane was shot down. Two of the nine crew members survived the incident, while the rest, including Wiemerslage, were killed. Seven men were reportedly recovered from the wreckage and buried near Züllsdorf. After the war ended, there was no evidence of Wiemerslage being a prisoner of war or having survived, so a Finding of Death was issued a year after the crash



RECOVERY: The American Graves Registration Command (AGRC) was charged with recovering the remains of fallen service members in the European Theater following the war. During a series of investigations of the Züllsdorf area between 1947 and 1949, the remains of all of the airmen who died in the B-17 crash, except for Wiemerslage, were found and identified. After 1950, worsening diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, who controlled this part of Germany at the time, prevented the AGRC from investigating further. In November 1953, two German citizens conducted another search of the area on behalf of the AGRC, finding some bones, including the jaw with some teeth, and part of a wallet. However, it does not appear any further evidence was found. Wiemerslage's records from the time indicate the dental record was favorable and the wallet bore the initials "F.W." In March 1954, the remains were interred, to be held until the recovery of additional remains could be completed.

In June 2019, DPAA contracted Western Carolina University to excavate several possible locations around the area of Züllsdorf where the remains and wallet were found in the 1950s. Possible osseous material and possible material evidence was found and initially transferred to the Brandenburg Institute for Forensic Medicine before being sent to the DPAA Laboratory at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, for scientific analysis.

To identify Wiemerslage's remains, scientists from DPAA used anthropological analysis, as well as circumstantial and material evidence. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), Y chromosome DNA (Y-STR), and autosomal DNA (auSTR) analysis.



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DIGNIFIED TRANSFER 15 October 2021:



ROLLING THUNDER ATTENDEES (6) Rich Lanute, Mick Singer, Deb Gille, Mary Kirkpatrick, Wayne Kirkpatrick, and Andy Haszlkiewicz



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INTERMENT 23 October 21:

US Army Air Corps SGT Francis Wiemerslage came home to rest on 23 October 2021 next to his family members in ST Joseph Cemetery, River Grove, IL

More than 100 people came out to ST Joseph Cemetery to honor SGT Wiemerslage, who was buried with full military honors for his sacrifice in WWII.

A military honor guard stood at attention as a 21-gun salute was fired and the bugler played taps before SGT Wiemerslage relatives received the folded American flag that rested on the coffin.

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.



ROLLING THUNDER ATTENDEES (20) Rich Lanute, Diana Lanute, Kevin Calder, John Cummings, Jim Purcell, Deb Gille, Mick Singer, Paul Hebein, Mary Kirkpatrick, Wayne Kirkpatrick, Chuck Carlson, Joyce Miller, Dave Miller, Chuck Schumann, Scott Seal, Donna Swieton, Gene Rigsby, Greg Smith, Andy Haszlkiewicz, and Patricia Thies.



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CHAPTER COIN and POW/MIA FLAG: A National POW/MIA Flag, flown over the Pentagon, and a Chapter 2, IL challenge coin was presented to SGT Wiemerslage's surviving niece and family members. Our coin symbolizes a "test of our metal" in supporting the on-going efforts to ensure the remaining 82,000 plus servicemen, servicewomen, and civilians, unaccounted for, are returned to our Country and to their loved ones.

