A Mission to Remember

Missing in America Project honors near-forgotten veterans from across the country with a final salute

By Dianna Troyer

Veterans’ cremated remains have been found in the most unlikely places: an auctioned storage unit and an abandoned car.

Their abandonment haunted Vietnam veteran Rich Cesler, so in 2006 he co-founded the Missing in America Project in Boise, Idaho.

The national nonprofit organization’s volunteers find, identify and inter the unclaimed cremains of veterans, some dating to the Civil War.

“These veterans served our country and deserve to have a dignified funeral,” says Rich, 67. “The military is like an extended family. You never leave someone behind, and these cremains were left for unknown reasons. It wasn’t right, so I had to do something about it.”

Since the organization started, volunteers nationwide have visited more than 1,600 funeral homes, identified nearly 2,400 veterans’ cremains and interred more than 2,100.

Most cremains have been found in funeral homes, where they rested for decades in some cases, in hopes a family member eventually would claim them.

MIAP Executive Director Fred Salanti of Redding, California, estimates there are thousands more unclaimed veterans.

“Volunteers usually find 10 to 35 veterans in each funeral home, and there are about 23,000 funeral homes we still have to visit,” says Fred, 66, a disabled Vietnam veteran and retired Army major. “For me, this is a lifelong mission.”

A National Collaboration

In 2006, Fred and Rich met when they realized each was confronting the issue of forgotten veterans. Rich had just been hired as director of the new Idaho State Veterans Cemetery in Boise when he was asked what he planned to do about veterans’ unclaimed cremains in funeral homes, and medical examiner and coroner offices.

“I was flabbergasted,” recalls Rich. “I had no idea that had happened.”

A veteran’s cremains are prepared for interment at Washington State Veterans Cemetery near Spokane.

Photo by Victor Bobb
Fred, who was living in Grants Pass, Oregon, had been attending funerals as part of a color guard for indigents and veterans who had no family members.

He learned funeral homes statewide had numerous unclaimed veterans’ cremains. He called veterans cemetery directors in surrounding states, including Rich, to see if veterans’ unclaimed cremains were an issue elsewhere.

Rich invited Fred to the first service he organized for unclaimed veterans at the new Idaho cemetery. They formed an alliance and organized the Missing in America Project.

During a long overdue ceremony on November 9, 2006, in honor of Veterans Day, Rich interred 20 veterans and one spouse with full military honors. Among those were Army Staff Sergeant Richard Trueman and his wife, Martha, whose remains were found in plastic cremation containers in an abandoned storage unit when it was auctioned in Meridian, a suburb of Boise.

“All his military documentation was there, too,” recalls Rich. “Richard had been awarded two purple hearts in Korea and served in Vietnam, too. He was a forgotten hero.”

**Voice for the Voiceless**

In 2006, Rich helped write legislation in Idaho allowing funeral home directors to release veterans’ unclaimed cremains to veteran service organizations such as MIAP when no family exists or is able to claim the remains.

Since then, 33 states have passed similar legislation. Rich says every state needs to acknowledge the unclaimed remains and allow proper burial.

With Idaho’s new veterans cemetery established, Rich left in 2007 and was hired as director of the new Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake.

During the next five years, he and MIAP volunteers interred the remains of more than 60 veterans and two spouses.

Among them was Army Specialist Lyndon A. Atwood, who had served in the Army from 1956 to 1959 and died homeless in Clarkston, Washington, in 2005. Six years later, his cremains and an American flag were found in the trunk of an abandoned car.

“An acquaintance of his had apparently picked up the remains and for some reason had put them in his car, which was left by the side of a road,” recalls Rich. “Why are cremains unclaimed even though the Veterans Administration provides burial benefits?”

“For every 1,000 veterans, there are 1,000 different circumstances and stories,” says Rich.

In some cases, veterans lost touch with family because they were homeless when they died, and were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injuries.

Sometimes, no family members survive the veterans or they just don’t get around to retrieving the veterans’ remains. Others may not value the cremains because they believe the soul and spirit are gone, and only ashes are left. Some veterans told family members before they died that they didn’t want a funeral.

“MIAP has become the voice for those who have none and is dedicated to remembering our forgotten heroes,” says Rich.

**Motivation for MIAP**

Fred says two mottos summarize the motivation of MIAP volunteers: It’s the right thing to do. No one left behind.

“My nickname is Waterworks because I get so emotional hearing about these deceased veterans’ stories,” says Fred.
“We have no idea how many unclaimed veterans are still out there and can only make an educated guess.”

—Fred Salanti
MIAP co-founder and executive director

“Heroic Buffalo Soldier Laid to Rest at Arlington

By Dianna Troyer

Isaiah Mays, a Medal of Honor recipient and a corporal in the 24th Infantry—one of the Army’s Buffalo Soldier regiments—was buried in a pauper’s grave in Arizona until the Missing in America Project intervened.

“He was in the Arizona State Hospital All Souls graveyard in Phoenix,” says Charles “Chaz” Jackson, a retired teacher and president of the Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Riders Club of Arizona. “It wasn’t a fitting place for him to be buried.”

After the club’s unsuccessful attempts to get Isaiah to a national veterans’ cemetery, Fred Salanti, MIAP executive director, got a court order to exhume his remains. Isaiah was re-interred at Arlington National Cemetery in 2009.

“I rode six days in the rain as part of the MIAP cross-country motorcycle escort when Isaiah and two Silver Star recipients were interred,” recalls Chaz, who made the journey from Arizona to Arlington.

He kept a flag presented to him as a surrogate family member during the funeral service.

“Isaiah didn’t have any relatives,” Chaz says.

A staff member at the hospital had alerted the club that Isaiah had been buried there in 1925—a time when the indigent were housed at the hospital along with the mentally ill and tuberculosis patients.

Isaiah had applied for federal pension, but was denied.

In 1889, he defended an Army payroll wagon from bandits near Pima, about 135 miles northeast of Tucson. Despite being shot in both legs, he crawled two miles to the nearest ranch to get help. For his heroism, he was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1890.

“The rancher who owns the land where it happened put up a memorial there,” says Chaz. “It’s about 19 miles off the main highway down a dirt road.”

Born a slave in 1858 in Virginia, Isaiah enlisted in the Army in Columbus, Ohio.

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As former soldiers, Bud Thieme and Bob Patrick feel a deep kinship with the unclaimed cremated remains of veterans they have found in Oregon and Washington.

“We’re all part of the same military family, regardless of when or where someone served,” says Bud, 64, state coordinator of the Missing in America Project for Oregon and MIAP’s national financial officer. “For whatever reason, these veterans’ remains have been left by their biological family, but we’re glad to step in as their surrogate relatives and friends to give them a funeral they deserve,” says Bud, a Vietnam War veteran who lives in Grants Pass.

In Oregon, 30 MIAP volunteers have interred the unclaimed cremains of more than 50 veterans at Willamette National Cemetery or Eagle Point National Cemetery.

“We’ve had services for vets from World War I up to the Vietnam War,” says Bud.

In Washington, MIAP volunteers have interred more than 120 at the Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake or Tahoma National Cemetery in Kent.

As part of the funeral processions, Bud and Bob—MIAP’s Washington state coordinator—organize a motorcycle escort. In August, Bob planned the chapter’s first MIAP Final ride to the Medical Lake cemetery.

“We had 34 veterans, and the cemetery director held a ceremony for 47 vets total, with the other 13 coming from other sources,” says Bob, 68, a Vietnam veteran who lives in Seattle. “This was the cemetery’s fourth annual MIAP event.”

About 65 motorcyclists rode 300 miles across the state from Tulalip near Seattle to Medical Lake near Spokane, escorting the remains.

“I’m always amazed at the turnout we get for people who want to ride and pay their respects to these veterans,” says Bob. “We’ve had as many as 200 riders on a rainy day when we’ve gone to Tahoma.”

MIAP’s Washington chapter has about eight volunteers, with three visiting funeral homes to research cremains.

“We need volunteers on the east side of the state to see if there are unclaimed remains at funeral homes and to do the research to see if they are veterans,” says Bob.

Obtaining proof of military service can be a time-consuming process, “but when we find cremains of a veteran, it makes it worthwhile and keeps us going,” says Bud.

To support MIAP through donations or to volunteer, contact information is available at www.miap.us. Bud may be contacted at bikerpapa@miap.us or at (541) 660-2619. Bob may be reached at washington@miap.us or (206) 789-2042.
In the Kitchen
Recipes That Satisfy

The holidays bring together the entire family. A warm, inviting meal is often at the heart of a memorable gathering.

While delectable entrees often are revered as the stars of holiday meals, many agree a holiday dinner is not complete without the stuffing.

This year, add an element of surprise to your holiday menu by serving a twist on classic stuffing with one of these mouth-watering recipes.

Caramelized Onion with Pancetta and Rosemary Stuffing

- 6 tablespoons butter
- 3 cups sweet onions, diced
- 1 cup pancetta, cubed
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary leaves, chopped
- 3 cups chicken broth
- ¼ cup sherry
- 14 ounces herb-seasoned stuffing

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Heat the butter in a 3-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the onions and cook for 15 minutes, or until well browned, stirring occasionally.

In a saucepan, stir the pancetta, garlic, celery and rosemary; cook until pancetta is well browned, stirring occasionally. Stir in the broth and sherry; heat to a boil.

Remove the saucepan from the heat. Add the stuffing and mix lightly.

Spoon the stuffing mixture into a greased 3-quart casserole. Cover. Bake for 30 minutes, or until stuffing mixture is hot.

Serves 12

Courtesy of Pepperidge Farm

Holiday Classics with a Twist

Apple-Raisin Stuffing

- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup celery, chopped
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- 10½ ounces condensed chicken broth
- 4 cups herb-seasoned stuffing
- 1 medium apple, cored and chopped
- ¼ cup raisins
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
Heat the butter in a 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the celery and onion and cook until tender, stirring occasionally. Add the broth and heat to a boil. Remove the skillet from the heat.

Add the stuffing, apples, raisins and cinnamon; mix lightly. Spoon the stuffing mixture into a 1½-quart casserole. Bake for 25 minutes, or until stuffing is hot.

Serves 4

Courtesy of Pepperidge Farm

Mushroom and Cashew Stuffing

¾ pound sliced white bread, cut into ½-inch cubes
¼ cup butter
1 large red onion, chopped
2 cups red pepper, chopped
½ pound button mushrooms, sliced
3 celery stalks, chopped
1½ cups roasted, unsalted cashews, halves and pieces
2 tablespoons fresh thyme or 1 teaspoon dried
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ cup canned chicken broth
2 eggs, beaten

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Place bread cubes on a large shallow baking pan and bake until golden, stirring occasionally, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a large mixing bowl. Turn down the oven to 350 degrees.

Melt the butter in a large heavy skillet. Add the onions and cook until clear, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Add red peppers, mushrooms and celery. Cook until tender, about 5 to 7 minutes.

Combine with the bread and add the nuts, seasonings, broth and beaten eggs. Stir well and pour into an 8-by-8-inch greased baking pan, or one of similar size. Cover and bake for about 1 hour.

Serves 8

Courtesy of Wheat Foods Council

Whole Wheat Pecan Stuffing

4 cups whole wheat bread, cut into ½-inch cubes
¾ cup giblets (optional)
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
½ cup onion, chopped
½ cup green pepper, chopped
¼ cup mushrooms, sliced
½ teaspoon dried thyme
½ teaspoon Spanish paprika
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
½ cup golden seedless raisins
½ cup pecans, chopped
1 cup chicken broth
1 large egg, lightly beaten

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

If using giblets, cover with water and bring to a boil. Boil gently for about 20 minutes, until done. Drain and chop.

Bake bread cubes on a jelly-roll pan until golden, stirring occasionally, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a large mixing bowl. Reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees.

Melt the butter in a large skillet. Add the onion, celery and green pepper; cook until tender, about 15 minutes, adding the mushrooms for the last few minutes. Combine with bread.

Add the seasonings, giblets, raisins, pecans, broth and egg. Stir well and pour into a casserole dish sprayed with cooking spray. Bake covered for about 1 hour.

Serves 8

Courtesy of Wheat Foods Council

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802 L. Schultheis Road
Uniontown, WA 99179

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1362 Toolik Drive Apt. B
North Pole, AK 99705

A classical Lutheran school that just opened this fall would greatly appreciate your support in collecting Box Tops for Education and Labels for Education.
Columbia Lutheran School Boosters
2323 E. 12th St.
The Dalles, OR 97058

My first-grade students are working hard to save Box Tops for Education. We are hoping you can help us out. Thank you from excited first graders.
Cindy Schumacher
305 Rock Pit Road
Cottonwood, ID 83522

Collecting Box Tops for Education. Our small community could really use the help.
Debbie Cross
355 NE 5th
Irrigon, OR 97844

Small rural school needs your continued support in collecting Box Tops for Education and Labels for Education.
Solomon School PTU
P.O. Box 167
Solomon, AZ 85551

North Pole Elementary School would appreciate Box Tops for Education or Labels for Education. Our PTA uses them to bring authors or artists in residence to our school. Thank you in advance.
Rachel Howe, PTA President
North Pole Elementary School
250 Snowman Lane
North Pole, AK 99705

Joy Elementary is collecting Box Tops for Education and Labels for Education.
Melanie Hinzman
Joy Elementary
24 Margaret St.
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Philomath Elementary School would appreciate help to collect Box Tops for Education and Labels for Education. Our school uses the money to fund field trips, replace playground equipment and other needs as they arise. Thank you.
Trina Gary
Philomath School Parent Club
239 S. 16th St.
Philomath, OR 97370

Odds
Looking for inexpensive cups and saucers. Will pay reasonable price and shipping. Please email.
Jackie Molina
P.O. Box 716
Janesville, CA 96114
jmolinacfr@yahoo.com

I am looking for one of the 2008 or 2009 purple survivor T-shirts from Relay For Life in La Pine, Oregon, to include in a T-shirt quilt in memory of my deceased husband. He participated in one or both of these and I cannot find his shirt. Will pay postage. Thank you.
Barb Klinski
14716 N. Sugar Pine Way
La Pine, OR 97739
bklinski98@msn.com

I am looking for a picture of the airplane that was once at Avery Park in Corvallis, Oregon. I have searched everywhere without success. Your help is greatly appreciated.
Coleen Lossett
1575 Maple Place
Lebanon, OR 97355
coleenlossett@gmail.com

Recipes
I love homemade crackers but no longer have the recipe. Does anyone have a recipe for crackers? I received over 30 recipes for my Applettes and Cotletts request. They taste wonderful. Thank you to all.
Susan McWillis
4000 Flynn St. Spc. 21
Bellingham, WA 98229

I am looking for a Panera bread recipe. Thank you for sharing with me.
Bettie Racca
P.O. Box 915
Delta Junction, AK 99737

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Nine Tips for Shooting Wildlife

There is something alluring about photographing wildlife. Maybe it’s the excitement of stalking an animal. Or perhaps it’s the satisfaction of hanging an image captured in the wild on your wall.

Whatever the attraction, here are nine tips to make it easier to photograph wildlife:

- **Research your quarry.** Know its habits and habitat. Likewise, understand any potential dangers to yourself or wildlife, and be prepared to shoot from a safe distance.

- **Always carry a long lens.** More often than not, you will not be able to get close to wildlife, so you need the extra magnification power of the longest lens you have to photograph animals from a distance.

- **Look for the best light.** Scout the area ahead of time, so you know what lighting conditions to expect. Mornings and early evenings are best. Those times of day also coincide with increased animal activity.

- **Use a tripod.** One with a ballhead camera/lens mount is best for tracking moving subjects.

- **Mix it up.** For example, shoot tight with a telephoto lens, as well as zooming out to capture the animal surrounded by its environment.

- **Try to photograph at eye level with your subject.** It presents a more natural scene.

- **Always carry extra storage media and batteries.** Every photographer has had the misfortune of running out of one or the other in the middle of a photo shoot.

- **Prepare for the worst.** If you plan to go off-trail, pad and secure your equipment. If there is the possibility of rain or wet conditions, waterproof yourself and your equipment.

- **Avoid being a fair-weather photographer.** Inclement weather is not necessarily a bad thing. It can provide opportunities for spectacular photos.

**Makin’ a List**

Believe it or not, Christmas is just around the corner. That means it’s time to update your outdoor wish list.

Remember: The key to getting what you ask for is to be specific. Whenever possible, include brand, model number, color, size and any other pertinent information to make shopping easier for Santa.

**Four Quick and Easy Gun Cleaning Tips**

- **Safety first:** Always ensure your gun is unloaded, and wear safety glasses to protect your eyes from errant bore-brush bristles and solvent spatter.

- **Have the right tools on hand,** beyond the basic gun cleaning kit. For example, a toothbrush, dental picks and cotton swabs are great for cleaning the barrel while it is still warm—but not hot.

- **Prepare for the worst.** When sending a photo, identify people and pets, and tell us the story behind the picture. Email your submission to info@ruralite.com.

Photo by Matthew Rambo

Many of Curtis Condon’s fondest memories involve outdoor adventures with friends and family, whether fishing with old school buddies, backpacking in the mountains of the Northwest with his sons or bird watching along the coast with his wife. He feels fortunate to have the opportunity to write about the outdoors and other subjects for more than 30 years.
Automotive
Wanted: 1967-1972 Buick Skylark, GS, Stage 1, GSX parts, leads or complete car. Email billybibbett@hotmail.com. 1214

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Anderson Island, Washington. 2bd, 2ba, 1,685sqf house, extra lot. Riviera Association, golf, access to saltwater marina, lake. $98K. (253) 535-6407; exco2@wmail.net. Tacoma, Washington. 1214

North Idaho. 28+ac timbered w/ seasonal creek. Excellent view lots at top. 2011 timber appraisal $48,000+. Deer, elk, turkey are abundant. (208) 301-8878.

Eastern Washington. 1.7ac, timberland, development potential, borders Mt. Spokane State Park, view, new 20+gpm well, power, cabin, garage, barn, on county road. $180,000. (509) 326-0922. 1114

Walla Walla County, Oregon. Furnished 4bd, 2ba, knotty pine on big wooded 8.5ac. Best views, elk, Grande Ronde. 2-car garage. See at BuyOwner.com at BUY213720.

Beautiful 12-ac above Dworshak Reservoir near Orofino, Idaho. 2.5mi to boat launch. 40x48 shop. Power, well, septic, RV hookup. $179,900. (208) 245-1780. 1114

Baker City, Oregon. Elkhorn Mts. 3bd, 2ba, doublewide, 1,536sqft, 5ac, fireplace, deck, screened porch. 3-stall horse shelter, hay shed, fenced/cross fenced. $197,000. (541) 519-6895.

Riverfront (Little Deschutes), secluded, cabin, outbuildings, legal access, fire abated, 3.5ac total, additional dwelling sites, as “estate.” $300,000. R.J. Swibies, P.O. Box 1811, La Pine, OR 97739.

Yamhill, Oregon. Newer 3bd, 2.5ba home on 31+ac. Great for starter farm or vineyard. Gorgeous setting w/ timber, pastures, ponds, wildlife. Email yamhillcountryheaven@gmail.com. 1214

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Excellent fiber. Great 4-H project. Cost negotiable. (541) 380-0327; mcelwee@gorge.net. 1114

Miscellaneous


Natural burial. White Eagle Memorial Preserve at Ekone Ranch is a conservation burial ground in southern Washington. Call Jodie at (206) 338-1041. www.naturalburialground.org. 1214

Pets, Supplies
AKC registered Bernese Mountain Dog puppies. Raised w/ both parents assisting in their development. Myrtle Point, Oregon. If interested, call (515) 572-4409; bernesemountaindog@mycomspan.com. 1114

AKC-registered Airedales. Fort Sage Kennels, Patricia Sharp, P.O. Box 246, Doyle, CA 96109; (530) 827-2271. 0315

Books/DVDs. In light of the coming economic development. Myrtle Point, Oregon. If interested, call (541) 572-4409; bernesemountaindog@mycomspan.com. 1114

Real Estate
Prineville, Oregon. Rural 1ac parcels on new paved dead-end road. Trees, wildlife, privacy. 5mi to hospital, shopping. Ideal retirement area. $29,000. Terms w/ $10,000 down. (541) 350-4077.

North Idaho. Usable 110ac adjoining timber company land. Timber, hay, class I stream, lots of elk, Marlette home, 2 garages/shops. Great access. $650K. (208) 245-1780. 1114

Hay farm near golf course, fruit trees, lg. pond, forested nature trails, paved road, replaceable home, barn, buildings. Lebanon, Oregon. $379,00. beautiful30ac@yahoo.com. 1114

Anderson Island, Washington. 2bd, 2ba, 1,685sqf house, extra lot. Riviera Association, golf, access to saltwater marina, lake. $98K. (253) 535-6407: exco2@wmail.net. Tacoma, Washington. 1214

North Idaho. 28+ac timbered w/ seasonal creek. Excellent view lots at top. 2011 timber appraisal $48,000+. Deer, elk, turkey are abundant. (208) 301-8878.

Eastern Washington. 1.7ac, timberland, development potential, borders Mt. Spokane State Park, view, new 20+gpm well, power, cabin, garage, barn, on county road. $180,000. (509) 326-0922. 1114

Walla Walla County, Oregon. Furnished 4bd, 2ba, knotty pine on big wooded 8.5ac. Best views, elk, Grande Ronde. 2-car garage. See at BuyOwner.com at BUY213720.

Beautiful 12-ac above Dworshak Reservoir near Orofino, Idaho. 2.5mi to boat launch. 40x48 shop. Power, well, septic, RV hookup. $179,900. (208) 245-1780. 1114

Baker City, Oregon. Elkhorn Mts. 3bd, 2ba, doublewide, 1,536sqft, 5ac, fireplace, deck, screened porch. 3-stall horse shelter, hay shed, fenced/cross fenced. $197,000. (541) 519-6895.

Riverfront (Little Deschutes), secluded, cabin, outbuildings, legal access, fire abated, 3.5ac total, additional dwelling sites, as “estate.” $300,000. R.J. Swibies, P.O. Box 1811, La Pine, OR 97739.

Yamhill, Oregon. Newer 3bd, 2.5ba home on 31+ac. Great for starter farm or vineyard. Gorgeous setting w/ timber, pastures, ponds, wildlife. Email yamhillcountryheaven@gmail.com. 1214
160 secluded acres, Eastern Oregon high desert. Surrounded by public lands. Perfect for recreation or hunting. Owner preference elk, antelope, deer tags. $45,000. (541) 576-2030.

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Kona, Maui, condo vacation rental. 2bd, 2ba, kitchen, on beach. Check website for more details, alohanw.com. (360) 581-2203, (360) 249-4405. 1114


Kauai vacation rental, 2bd, full kitchen. Minutes from beaches. $600/wk. (808) 245-6500; makanacrest.com, kauaiweddings.com. 0215


Ona, Oregon, Paradise Villa condo located on the 18th fairway of Kona Country Club w/ sweeping ocean views. 3bdr, 2ba. Specials. (503) 369-2638; www.konacondo.info. 0515

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