

# U.S. soldier buried at Ardennes

Story and Photo

by  
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He was an American soldier who died in World War II. He was Caucasian, medium build, and approximately 70 inches tall. The words "Here rests in honored glory a comrade in arms, known but to God," are inscribed on the white marble cross that marks his grave at Ardennes American Cemetery and Memorial near Liege, Belgium.

Belgian veterans, schoolchildren, embassy representatives, and American officials attended the military burial of this unknown soldier Nov. 8. His casket, draped with a U.S. flag, was carried from the Ardennes memorial by six uniformed, white-gloved pallbearers to a hearse and then driven to the burial site. Because he was unknown, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish clergymen offered prayers at the graveside service.

A squad from the U.S. Army Memorial Affairs Activity, Europe, (USAMAAE), fired three seven-shot volleys. Taps were played as pallbearers held the flag steady over the coffin. After folding it neatly, the flag was presented to Maj. Gen. Lawrence M. Jones, Jr., commander of the 21st Support Command. Jones saluted the colors in remembrance and accepted the flag on behalf of the dead soldier's family. Representatives of numerous veterans' groups filed by, lowering their regimental banners in tribute. Belgian citizens knelt in prayer at the grave. A small schoolboy placed a three-flower bouquet by the cross.

Last Jan. 14, a German citizen looking for WWII souvenirs found the soldier's remains and some war artifacts in the forest at Losheimer Grassen, Belgium. Using a



**Six USAMAAE soldiers participate in funeral services for an unknown American soldier recently buried in Belgium. (Butler)**

metal detector the man also uncovered an American helmet, part of a mine detector, and a segment of an American sub-machine gun. He informed German authorities, who told American officials of the discovery. Two weeks later, the remains were turned over to a recovery team from USAMAAE. A snowstorm ended an effort to search the forest for additional remains and artifacts, and the attempt was re-

scheduled for April.

On their second attempt, the team, supervised by Capt. Michael Willson, commander, USAMAAE, and John G. Rogers, mortuary officer, was successful. After searching a 100-meter area, they retrieved pieces of weapons, landmines, and tankers. Further identifying data and remains were not found.

Being unable to identify the remains,

USAMAAE informed its headquarters in Washington, D.C. that the remains were believed to be those of a U.S. soldier. They requested war records be researched to see if any man was listed as missing in that area of Belgium. Washington couldn't associate a name with the remains and directed USAMAAE, located in Frankfurt, to bury him as an unknown American soldier.

The seven-man firing squad (Sp4's William Butts, Greg Johnson, Scott Griffin, James Ziegelman, Harry Abbott, Greg Walker, and Henry Harbison, Jr.) and six pallbearers (Sgt. s Michael Chines and Nora Avendano, and Sp4's Lyle Hedges, Arthur Gant, Frank Napoleon, and Margaret Mead) participating in the ceremony were soldiers assigned to USAMAAE. A total of 24 soldiers are assigned to the unit. All hold the MOS 57 F (Graves Registration Specialist) and attended an eight-week course at Ft. Lee, Va., where they received instruction in search and recovery of remains, body identification techniques, and procedures for shipping remains from Europe to the U.S. Supplemental duties include acting as pallbearers and firing squads at burial ceremonies for American soldiers. "I was very pleased with their performance at the ceremony," Maj. Gen. Jones commented.

Of the unknown soldier, Jones said, "He was probably tired, terrified, cold and hungry. Nobody knew where he was, so he died alone. Thirty years later, he was found where he fell. The grace for soldiers prepared to give their lives for their country, and asks citizens and those in senior positions to be worthy of this sacrifice. It's a sobering thought. . . WW II was a holocaust in which several million died, and it should never happen again."