. soldier bur it Ardennes

Story and Photo by:

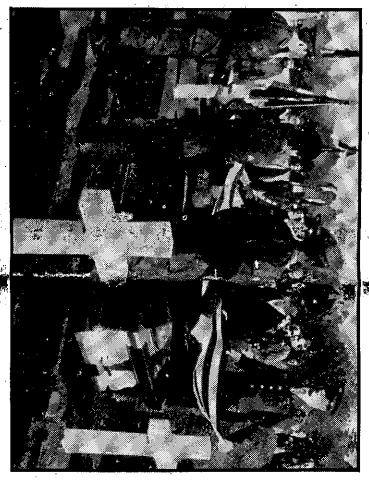
Patricia Butler

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 grave-side service.

A squad from the U.S. Army Memorial Affairs Activity, Europe, (USAMAAE), thred three seven-shot volleys. Taps were played as pallbearers held the flag steady over the coffin. After folding it neatly, the reflag 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 kneeled in prayer at the grave. A small schoolboy placed a three-flower bouquet by the cross.

Last Jan. 14, a German citizen looking for WW II souveniers 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 dectector the man also uncovered an American helmet, part of a mine detector, and a segment of an American sub-machine gun. He informed German authories, who told American officials of the discovery. Two weeks later, the remains were turned over to a recovery team from USA-MAE. 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 souad (Sp4's Wil-

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

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 asks that we remember the young 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."