



Transport vehicle for the cremains of the veterans

MONMOUTH COUNTY SHERIFF SHAUN GOLDEN, THROUGH HIS VETERANS SERVICE COUNCIL, ENSURED UNCLAIMED VETERANS ASHES RECEIVE FULL MILITARY HONORS FOR THEIR SERVICE

By Michael Ferraro, Coordinator, Veterans Service Council, Cynthia Scott, Public Information Officer and Ted Freeman, Executive Undersheriff Monmouth County Sheriff's Office

On June 23, 2021, with leadership and coordination by Monmouth County Sheriff Shaun Golden, Veteran's Service Council Coordinator Michael Ferraro, the Sheriff's Office Veterans Service Council, and in partnership with the Vietnam Veterans NJ Shore Area Chapter 12 of the Vietnam Veterans of America, the cremains of 23 United States military veterans and two spouses began a long-overdue journey to their final resting place at Brigadier General William C. Doyle Memorial Cemetery in New Hanover, New Jersey. The cremains of these American military veterans had been sitting on shelves in funeral parlors, forgotten for years or decades, in tin cans or cardboard boxes, unclaimed by family members. These veterans served in the United States Army, United States Navy,

United States Army Air Corps, and the United States Merchant Marine. Nine served in World War I, eleven in World War II, one in Korea, and one in Vietnam.

At a quarterly meeting of the Monmouth County Veterans Service Council, Golden and Ferraro first learned of the plight of these long-forgotten veterans when representatives of the VVA Chapter 12 explained the Veterans Cremains Program and how across the nation veterans' remains are stored unclaimed and without the honor of a proper funeral. Following the presentation by VVA Chapter 12, and the video that showcased the Cremains Program in detail, Golden committed the entire Monmouth County Sheriff's Office to spearheading the Veterans Cremains Program. Golden im-

mediately commenced weekly meetings with Monmouth County law enforcement agencies, first responders and local support resources to ensure a proper public response to honor these veterans. At a meeting in May 2021, the burial date of June 23, 2021, was designated for the motorcade and burial of these cremains, at which point the motorcade to the cemetery and proper route were fully developed.

Organizations taking a lead role in putting this concept together included: Monmouth County Sheriff's Office, the Vietnam Veterans NJ Shore Area Chapter 12, the Monmouth County Sheriff's Veteran's Service Council including American Legion Posts, Veterans of Foreign Wars Chapters, Jewish War Veterans of Deal, the Freehold and Manasquan

Elks Lodges, CentraState Healthcare System and the amazing support of law enforcement agencies and first responders throughout Monmouth County and beyond.

The Manalapan Township Police Department served as the storage locations of the cremains and served as the starting point for the motorcade to the cemetery. A dignified service was held at Manalapan Township Police Headquarters at which first responders, in pairs, one holding the cremains, the other a folded American flag, carried each veteran and flag to the transport vehicle. Manalapan Mayor Jack McNaboe offered remarks followed by Police Chaplain Julius Cooper, of St. James AME Church in Manalapan Township. During the service at Manalapan Township Police Headquarters, Dave Drummond, an active member of Chapter 12 of the Vietnam Veterans of America, and a POW during the Vietnam War with the late U.S. Sen. John McCain, read the name of each veteran as each of the veterans' cremains were individually escorted to the Sheriff's Office transport van. Bagpipers from Manalapan Township Police Department and the Friendly Sons of Shillelagh - Belmar, participated at the Manalapan Police Department and cemetery locations.

Once the cremains were properly secured in the vehicle, the mile-long motorcade left Manalapan Township Police Headquarters enroute to the cemetery with a brief stop at the Monmouth County Hall of Records in Freehold Borough. The motorcade had approximately sixty law enforcement vehicles, twelve EMS vehicles, six sheriff's vehicles, approximately one hundred motorcycles and a flyover by the New Jersey State Police helicopter plus a 21-gun salute. Over 40 law enforcement agencies from three counties were involved in the motorcade including the sheriff's offices of Monmouth, Ocean and Burlington counties.

Arriving at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Memorial Cemetery, the motorcade was escorted to the committal service shelter on the cemetery grounds with approximately 250 law enforcement, first responders, and various veterans' organizations in attendance.

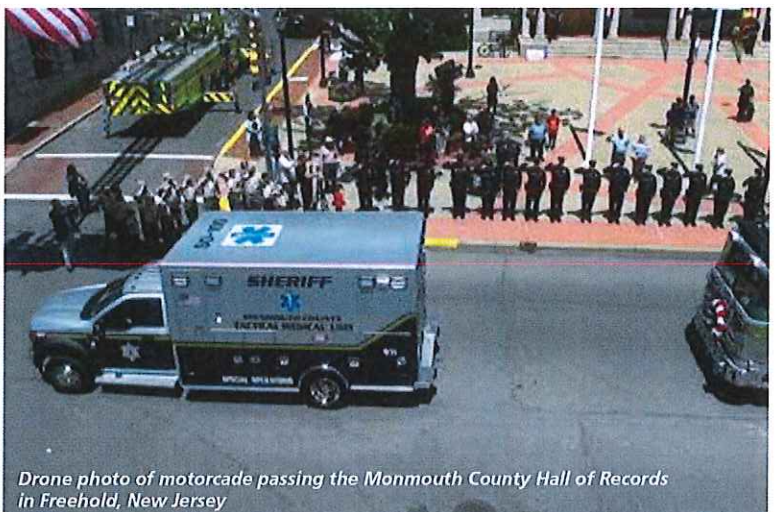
During the service at the cemetery, Richard Gough, Chairman of the Cremains Project of VVA Chapter 12, read the names of the veterans as they were moved from the host vehicle to the committed service shelter where they were



Sheriff's Officers place flower next to each veteran's urn



Family members who received the flag of one of the veterans



Drone photo of motorcade passing the Monmouth County Hall of Records in Freehold, New Jersey



Monmouth County Clerk Christine Giordano Hanlon, Sheriff Shaun Golden and Executive Administrative Assistant Selma Morris escort urn with the remains of one of the veterans being honored to his final resting place

placed on a covered table, each with an American flag. Once set, a rose was placed next to the cremains of each veteran and a hand salute rendered to each deceased veteran. Just prior to the conclusion of the funeral service, the mournful sounds of Echo Taps permeated the air.

Ernie DiOrio, Vice President, Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 12 said, "When I heard about veterans being abandoned on shelves at funeral homes, I couldn't believe it and I knew I had to do something, so it became my mission."

"It is truly an honor and privilege to be part of the Veteran Cremains Program for me," said Ferraro. "As a retired Air Force Veteran, I feel the public needs to know there are hundreds of veterans who have been cremated and are resting in basements of funeral homes unclaimed after serving our country."

"The debt that we owe our military veterans is one that can never be repaid, nor can we truly appreciate the sacrifices that each of them endured," said Golden. "That is why it is our solemn duty that the remains of these veterans are provided with the dignity and honor of a proper burial. The entire Monmouth County Sheriff's Office is proud to be a part of this event."

Golden thanks Chapter 12 of

the Vietnam Veterans of America for their commitment and tireless work to ensure that these forgotten veterans receive full military honors, as well as the outpouring of support from our law enforcement and first responder partners, in making these Veteran Cremains Projects observances memorable events.

On October 27, 2021, seven additional cremains of military veterans were transported to the committal service center at Brigadier General William C. Doyle Memorial Cemetery by the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office accompanied by VVA Chapter 12 and about

25 motorcyclists. Continuing the mission started by the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 12, assisted by the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office, a brief but moving ceremony was held at the committal service center as these brave souls completed their long-awaited arrival at their final resting place, now resting in peace with their brethren.

For information about the Veteran's Service Council of the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office, or the Veterans Cremains Project, please contact Veteran's Service Council Coordinator Michael Ferraro at 732-431-6400 extension 1806. 🇺🇸

Michael Ferraro, Command Chief Master Sergeant, U.S. Air Force (Ret.) Coordinator of the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office Veterans Service Council, Cynthia Scott, former Emmy Award Winning Journalist, Public Information Officer, Ted Freeman, Executive Undersheriff.



Combined Honor Guard of the Manalapan Township Police Department and the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office