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Good Morning Chairman Wimberger and committee members,

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 602. SB 602 appropriates funds to the University of Wisconsin Missing-In-Action Recovery and Identification Project (MIA RIP) which works to identify and bring home Wisconsin Veterans who are Missing-in-Action.

The UW MIA project works to recover, identify, and repatriate MIA U.S. Service members by conducting annual field excavations and year-round research assistance to families of missing service members. In order to help facilitate this, SB 602 gives the UW MIA Project the opportunity to request \$180,000 from the Joint Finance Committee each fiscal year during the 2021-2023 biennium. By giving the MIA project the ability to request these funds, UW can continue to work to bring all Wisconsin veterans home.

Although it is not an easy task, it is the hope of the UW MIA Project to expand its service, and to serve as a resource for the families of the over 1,500 Wisconsin MIA. This legislation gives families of these veterans the opportunity to find closure. Although we may never find all MIA veterans, Wisconsin must strive to do all it can to bring our veterans home and this legislation will allow these efforts to continue.

Thank you for hearing my testimony and for your support of this important piece of legislation.

Ken Skowronski
State Representative

**Senate Committee on Veterans & Military Affairs,
Constitution & Federalism**

2021 Senate Bill 602

*University of Wisconsin Missing-In-Action Recovery and Identification
Program*

December 14, 2021

Chairman Wimberger and members of the Senate Committee on Veterans & Military Affairs and Constitution & Federalism:

My name is Charles Konsitzke, and I am the associate director of the University of Wisconsin Biotechnology Center, and founder and team lead of the University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project. I would like to begin by thanking you all for the opportunity to testify and express the UW Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project's support for Senate Bill 602, which would provide over \$180,000 annually to our team for recovery attempt missions of missing in action service members from our state.

Of the over 82,000 American service members from around the country that remain unaccounted for from conflicts spanning from December 7th, 1941 at the outset of America's involvement in the Second World War, to the present, over 1,500 are from Wisconsin. Every corner of the state is still missing at least one servicemember.

These missing include those of a group of young Wisconsin men who fought and were trapped in the Philippines in spring of 1942, captured by the Imperial Japanese Army, and endured the Bataan Death March. Over three years of harsh imprisonment they faced disease, malnutrition, negligence, and brutality, and collectively came to be known as "the Janesville 99."

Missing servicemembers also include Wisconsin soldiers whose remains are somewhere in the jungles of New Guinea, Wisconsin Coast Guardsmen who went down in the icy North Atlantic on the USS Escanaba in 1943, Wisconsin airmen whose remains are below the surfaces of the fields of Northern France, Wisconsin soldiers whose remains are still buried somewhere on a Belgian hillside after their loss during the initial stages of the Battle of the Bulge, and Wisconsin soldiers,

**Help us bring
our heroes
home.**

To make a contribution, visit
mia.biotech.wisc.edu/donate/

**UW Missing in Action
Recovery & Identification Project**
425 Henry Mall, Suite 3130
Madison, WI 53706
(608) 890-4889





airmen, and Marines at or above the 38th Parallel on the Korean Peninsula, to name only a few.

This team has been the most dynamic collaboration of fellow students (including other student veterans), staff, faculty, and alumni that I've witnessed across UW-System institution campuses, consisting of individuals from a host of interdisciplinary backgrounds that include history, forensic anthropology, archaeology, biology, and genetics.

With the state's support, our team will be enabled to focus on these 1,500 missing Wisconsinites. It will allow the team to begin to locate and identify as many of these individuals as possible and bring them home while also continuing our partnership with the federal Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency.

I would like to close by thanking all the bill's authors, Senator Roth and Representative Skowonski as well as all legislative staff who have assisted us along the way. Thank you again to the committee and, at this time, I am available to answer any questions.

**Help us bring
our heroes
home.**

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**UW Missing in Action
Recovery & Identification Project**
425 Henry Mall, Suite 3130
Madison, WI 53706
(608) 890-4889

Overview:

- The University of Wisconsin Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project (UW MIARIP) honors the sacrifice of brave Americans who paid the ultimate price for our freedoms
- This bill utilizes \$180,000/year in state funding for the UW MIARIP to recover, repatriate, and identify specifically Wisconsin MIA Service Members
- *Wisconsin could be the first state in the nation to fund this mission for its own MIA Service Members*

1.) Mission/Purpose of the UW MIA RIP, and its Relationship with the DPAA:

- The UW MIA Recovery and Identification Project (UW MIA RIP) deploys an interdisciplinary team of UW-System experts and student volunteers in the fields of history, archaeology, anthropology, and biology
 - The project's primary goal is to research, recover, and biologically identify the remains of MIA Service Members
- The UW MIA Project was the first academic institution to partner with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), the Department of Defense agency responsible for identifying and repatriating the remains of U.S. Service Members. This partnership has grown to include 30 other academic institutions.
- The DPAA assigns the UW MIARIP with MIA recovery cases and provides informational and logistical support to aid in recovery efforts
- With state support, the group can begin to focus on recovering Wisconsin MIA Service Members

2.) History of the Organization and Past Recoveries:

- The University of Wisconsin Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project was founded in 2014 at the UW-Madison Biotechnology Center by Charles Konsitzke, the Associate Director of the center.
- Historically, the DPAA has assigned the team MIA from World War II in the European Theater
- The project has recovered three MIA American service personnel from World War II
 - Identification of Pfc. Lawrence Gordon in 2014
 - Recovery of fighter pilot 1st Lieutenant Frank Fazekas in summers 2016 and 2017
 - Recovery of fighter pilot 2nd Lieutenant Walter B. Stone in summer 2018
- Ongoing efforts began in summer 2019 in Belgium for a WWII missing U.S. Army Air Force Service Member

3.) Wisconsin MIAs:

- There are over 82,000 American MIA Service Members since WWII
- Over 1,500 of these cases are from Wisconsin
 - MIAs are from every corner of the state (see included map)

4.) UW MIA RIP's Current Capabilities and Limitations:

- The DPAA has not assigned the UW MIARIP with any Wisconsin MIA recovery missions, despite past requests
- Current funding from the DPAA allows for the attempted recovery of one American service member per year
- The team will continue to perform their contracted mission with the DPAA even with state support

5.) What We Hope to Accomplish Through Passage of the Bill:

- The passage of the bill will build off the group's past success with the DPAA, but with a much greater focus on serving the citizens of Wisconsin
- Recovery of the remains of one to three Wisconsin MIA Service Members each year
- Provide historical updates to Wisconsin families about their MIA relatives who are unrecoverable
 - i.e. Service Members lost at sea
- More rapid DNA analysis of recovered remains at the UW Biotechnology center
 - Develop the capacity to conduct DNA analysis on site (DPAA genetic analysis may take upwards up fifteen months)
- Conduct MIA recovery operations in areas off limits to DoD sponsored missions
 - i.e. North Korea and China



The American Legion,
Department of Wisconsin
2930 American Legion Dr.
Portage WI 53901
(608) 745-1090
wilegion.org



Founded on four pillars:
• Veterans Affairs &
Rehabilitation
• National Security
• Americanism
• Children & Youth

The mission of The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin is to provide service to veterans, their families and their communities.

December 6, 2021

Chairman and members of the committee, I am Paul Fisk Legislative Chair of The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin.

The American Legion is the largest Veterans Service Organization in the Nation. In Wisconsin, we have over 50,000 members with just over a century of advocating for veterans.

I wish to thank the University of Wisconsin for developing this project. It will provide valuable experience for those members of the University Community who work on it. I also want to thank all of the members of the Legislature and their staffs for putting this valuable piece of legislation together.

Senate Bill 602 relating to the University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project and making an appropriation has the full support of The American Legion. For a generation The American Legion has supported legislation and programs to account for those missing in action and the recovery of their remains. We must work to bring closure to the families of our comrades. It is important to the families that they know what happened to their loved one. It is a step forward that Wisconsin will work to bring this needed closure to Wisconsin families. The active role of the people of Wisconsin will make a difference.

The American Legion on both the national stage and here in Wisconsin works tirelessly to keep this issue front and center. At each Legion event there is either an empty chair or table to focus attendee's attention to those still missing. In many communities there is a silent march held in September. The participating Posts bring their colors and march several blocks to only the beat of a drum. It is a moving experience.

This bill gives hope to many families. We have seen the effect on families when they learn the fate of their loved one and the remains are returned home.

**SIXTY-SEVENTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
New Orleans, Louisiana
August 26, 27, 28, 1985**

Resolution No. 370: POW/MIAs

Origin: Iowa

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

**(Consolidated with Resolution Nos. 33 (NH), 130 (IL), 204 (MD), 249 (PA), 315 (NY), and
380 (WV))**

WHEREAS, There are currently over 2,450 Americans still missing or otherwise unaccounted for in Indochina; and

WHEREAS, The families of those U.S. servicemen and civilians missing in Indochina still suffer untold grief and uncertainty due to lack of an adequate accounting, and

WHEREAS, The President has declared the issue of Americans missing or otherwise unaccounted for in Indochina a matter of highest national priority, raised intelligence priorities, and initiated high-level dialogue with the government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on this issue; and

WHEREAS, These efforts have resulted in the repatriation of the remains of 30 missing servicemen during the past four years; and

WHEREAS, The government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has agreed to continue and increase cooperation with the United States, based on the successful joint recovery effort conducted in early 1985, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has indicated willingness to consider the U.S. proposal for joint evacuation of U.S. aircraft crash sites with the pledge to accelerate co-operation with the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in New Orleans, Louisiana, August 26, 27, 28, 1985, That we support the President's pledge of highest national priority to resolve the status of Americans still missing and unaccounted for in Indochina; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That we support the U.S. government policy that the fullest possible accounting can only be achieved through government-to-government cooperation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That we urge the U.S. Government to ensure this issue remains one of the highest national priority and to accelerate efforts in every honorable way to obtain the immediate release of any Americans who may still be held captive in Indochina, and the fullest possible accounting of those still missing and repatriation of the remains of those who died service our nation.

2.) History of the Organization and Past Recoveries:

- The University of Wisconsin Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project was founded in 2014 at the UW-Madison Biotechnology Center by Charles Konsitzke, the Associate Director of the center.
- Historically, the DPAA has assigned the team MIA from World War II in the European Theater.
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3.) Wisconsin MIAs:

- There are over 82,000 American MIA Service Members since WWII.
- *Over 1,500 of these cases are from Wisconsin*
 - *MIAs are from every corner of the state.*

4.) UW MIA RIP's Current Capabilities and Limitations:

The DPAA has not assigned the UW MIARIP any Wisconsin MIA recovery missions, despite past requests.

Current funding from the DPAA allows for the attempted recovery of one American service member per year.

The team will continue to perform their contracted missions with the DPAA alongside state supported missions.

5.) What We Hope to Accomplish Through Passage of this Bill to Fund the Project:

- The passage of the bill will build off the group's past success with the DPAA, but will allow a sole focus on serving the citizens of Wisconsin;
- Recovery of the remains of one to three Wisconsin MIA Service Members each year;

Informational Points

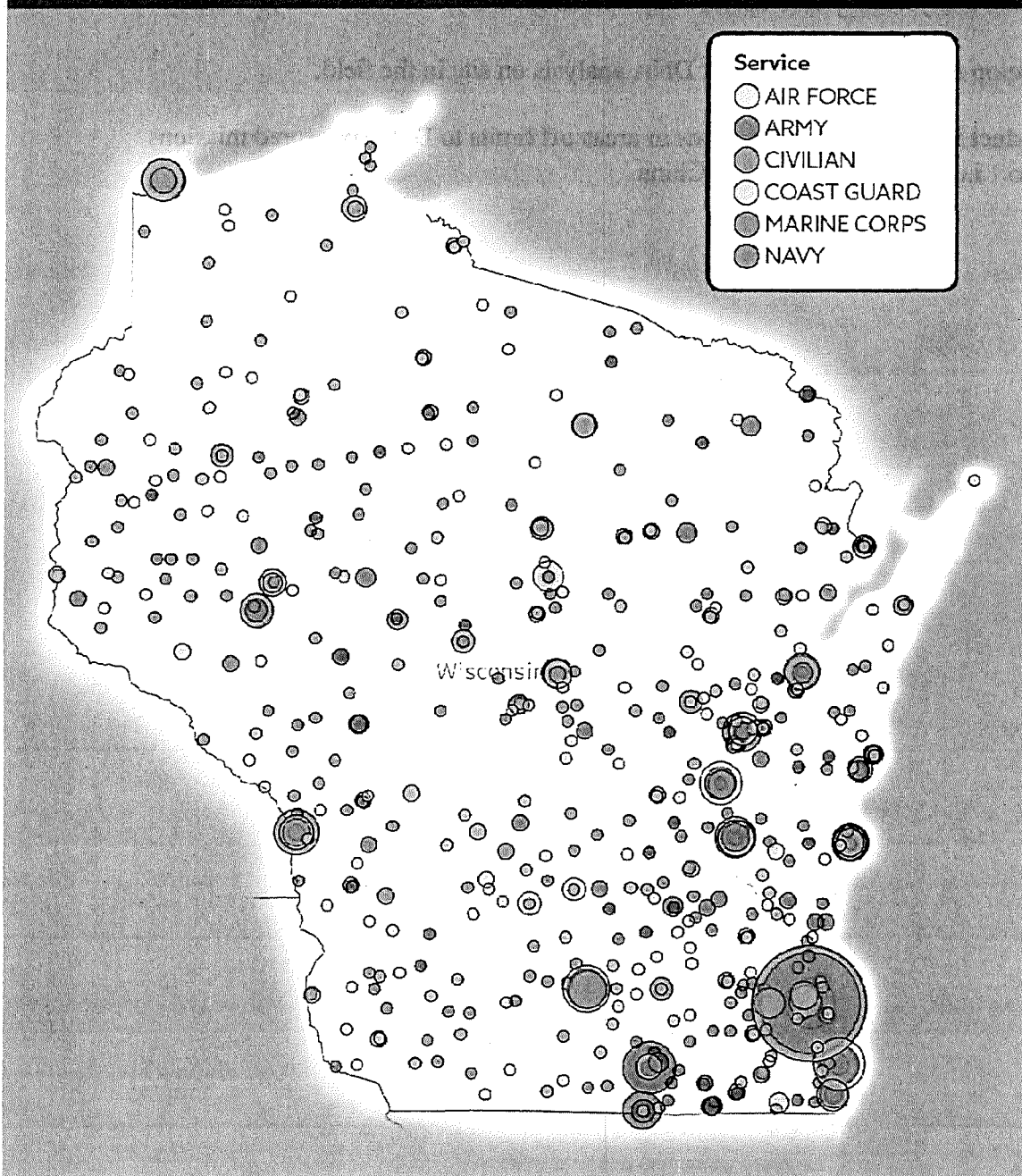
Overview:

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- This bill utilizes \$180,000/year in state funding for the UW MIARIP to recover, repatriate, and identify specifically Wisconsin MIA Service Members.
- *Wisconsin could be the first state in the nation to fund this mission for its own MIA Service Members.*

1.) Mission/Purpose of the UW MIA RIP, and its Relationship with the DPAA:

- The UW MIA Recovery and Identification Project (UW MIA RIP) deploys an interdisciplinary team of UW-System experts and student volunteers in the fields of history, archaeology, anthropology, and biology.
- The project's primary goal is to research, recover, and biologically identify the remains of MIA Service Member.
- The UW MIA Project was the first academic institution to partner with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), the Department of Defense agency responsible for identifying and repatriating the remains of U.S. Service Members. This partnership has grown to include 30 other academic institutions.
- The DPAA assigns the UW MIARIP with MIA recovery cases and provides informational and logistical support to aid in recovery efforts.
- With state support, the group can begin to focus on recovering Wisconsin MIA Service Members.

Wisconsin Missing in Action by Hometown



- Provide historical updates to Wisconsin families about their MIA relatives who are un-recoverable
 - i.e., Service Members lost at sea;
- More rapid DNA analysis of recovered remains at the UW Biotechnology center (DPAA genetic analysis may take upwards up fifteen months);
- Develop the capacity to conduct DNA analysis on site in the field;
- Conduct MIA recovery operations in areas off limits to DoD-sponsored missions
 - i.e., in North Korea and China.



FULFILLING OUR PROMISES
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

Department of Wisconsin

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
AL LABELLE
DAV BENEFITS PROTECTION TEAM LEADER
DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS AND
CONSTITUTION AND FEDERALISM
WISCONSIN STATE SENATE
DECEMBER 14, 2021**

Chairman Wimberger, and Members of the Committee:

Good morning! Thank you for allowing DAV (Disabled American Veterans) this opportunity to present our view on Senate Bill 602 (SB 602) Relating to: *the University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project and making an appropriation.*

DAV is a congressionally chartered national veterans' service organization of more than one million wartime veterans, all of whom were injured or made ill while serving on behalf of this nation. In Wisconsin, we have approximately 15,000 members.

Each year, we help more than 1 million veterans with Benefits, Transportation, Advocacy, Employment, and Volunteerism. Over Eighty percent (80%) of our total expenditures go to Service.

DAV Wisconsin considers the Missing in Action or (MIA) issue a high priority. Previously, one of our members, Rodney Helegson, a combat wounded Vietnam veteran, was a member of the DAV National Prisoner of War/Missing in Action or POW/MIA Committee.

The brave families of the missing continue to live in uncertainty and anguish. Finding and repatriating the remains of the missing is essential to finally give them a sense of closure.

We are grateful for the admirable work being done by the University of Wisconsin MIA Recovery and Identification Project (UW MIA Recovery Project) in conjunction with the United States Government's Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). Finding the remains of three (3) World War II veterans in their short existence speaks volumes about the excellence of their work.

Under SB 602, the UW MIA Recovery Project may request the Joint Committee on Finance to provide \$180,000 in each fiscal year of the 2021-2023 fiscal biennium for missions to recover and identify Wisconsin veterans who are missing in action. The request must include a research prospectus and spending plan for the requested MIA mission. DAV Wisconsin finds the bill reasonable and well crafted. Its intent is certainly humane.

Pursuant to DAV National Resolution 176¹, DAV Wisconsin strongly supports SB 602 and urges this Committee and the legislature to pass the bill unanimously, in an expeditious manner.

This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. We would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Committee Members may have.

¹ Resolution 176, *Seek the immediate release of any Americans who may still be held captive following any war and the return of the remains of any Americans who died during these wars* passed at DAV National Convention held in Orlando, Florida on August 6, 2019.

UW MIA Recovery Identification Project (UW MIA RIP)

Background

An unfortunate reality of military engagement is that sometimes service members are held against their will as prisoners of war. Even worse, their whereabouts may become unknown, and they are then classified as missing in action.

Initially, the responsibility of search and recovery fell on the Department of Defense or DOD's Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office and the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command. In early 2015, these organizations were merged to create a new government group, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency or DPAA.

The DPAA mission is "to provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation." Despite ongoing efforts, DPAA estimates that more than 80,000 individuals never returned home. The locations of these individuals are concentrated in the Philippines, Solomon Islands, Korea, South Pacific, North Atlantic and throughout Western Europe.

The DPAA Laboratory is the largest and most diverse skeletal identification laboratory in the world. It is staffed by more than thirty forensic experts and is the only accredited forensic laboratory.

In the Field, recovery teams use standard archaeology methods. Standard recovery missions that last 35 to 60 days.

Initial analysis occurs at the site, and the material is then brought back to the lab for additional examination. The lab procedure is conducted in the "blind," meaning lab personnel do not know the identity of the individual. A biological profile is used which includes sex, race, age at death, DNA, and dental records.

Regarding the Vietnam War, originally there were 2,646 MIAs. The total includes MIAs in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and China. The April 27, 2021, update shows 1,062 remains were repatriated, leaving 1,584 MIAs. Of the remaining 1,584 MIAs, 470 are listed in a non-recoverable category.

For Fiscal Year 2021, 119 MIAs have been identified. These include 105 from WWII, 13 from the Korean War, and 1 from the Vietnam War.

The 105 repatriated number from WWII come mainly from the *USS Oklahoma*, which was sunk on December 7, 1941, during the attack on Pearl Harbor. In 2015, the unidentified remains of crew members from the *Oklahoma* were disinterred for DNA analysis from the Punchbowl National Cemetery in Hawaii. Currently, 346 of the 394 crew members have been identified.

In June 2021, 19 *Oklahoma* crew members were identified. Among the identified remains were three brothers from New London, Wisconsin.

They are Navy Fireman 1st Class Malcolm J. Barber, 22; Navy Fireman 1st Class Leroy K. Barber, 21; and Navy Fireman 2nd Class Randolph H. Barber, 19.

UW MIA RIP

In Wisconsin, we are fortunate to have the University of Wisconsin Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project. The Project works to recover, identify, and repatriate MIA U.S. service members. They were the first academic institution to partner with DPAA. Today, DPAA partners with over fifty other academic and non-profit institutions.

Since 2014, the UW MIA Recovery and Identification Project has repatriated the remains of three (3) World War II veterans – none from Wisconsin. Currently, there are over 1,500 Wisconsin MIAs. In the future, the Project's goal is to solely focus on the recovery and identification of MIA service members from Wisconsin.

On October 8, 2021, State Senator Roger Roth introduced SB 602 which will help the UW MIA Recovery and Identification Project reach its stated future goal. The Senate Bill requests the Joint Committee on Finance provide \$180,000 to the UW Project in each fiscal year of the 2021-2023 fiscal biennium budget. The money will be used for missions to recover and identify Wisconsin veterans who are missing in action.

A companion Assembly Bill (AB 639) was introduced on October 21, 2021, by State Representative Ken Skowronski. The bills will be a legislative priority for DAV. Your support will be needed to ensure passage of this vital legislation.

Finally, the brave families of the missing continue to live in uncertainty and anguish. Finding and repatriating the remains of the missing is essential to finally give them a sense of closure. Please keep these families in your thoughts and prayers.

Thank you allowing me to convey this important information.

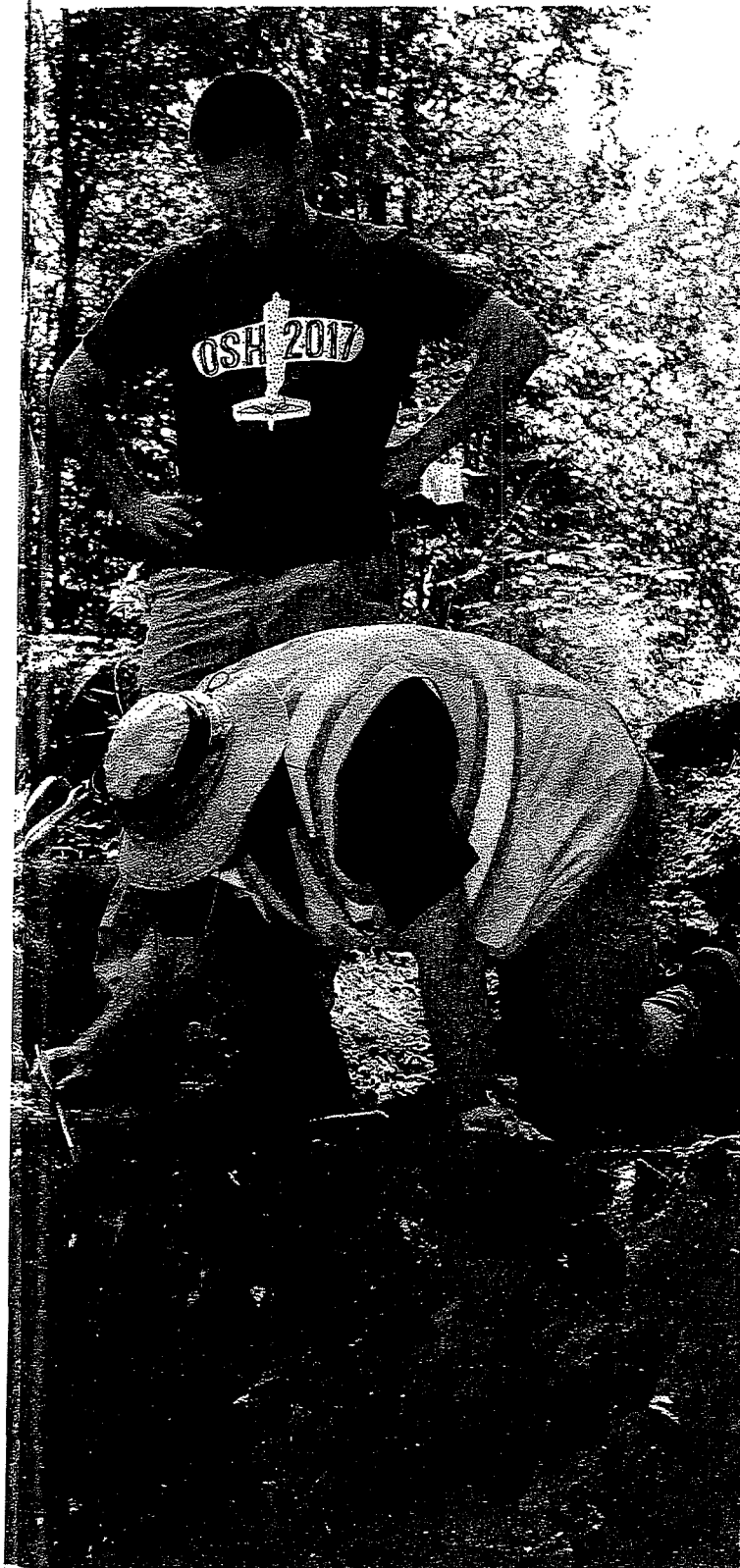
A Hero Comes Home

The UW's MIA Project collaborates with the Department of Defense to return the remains of a World War II pilot missing for 75 years.

BY CHRIS BARNCARD

MIA PROJECT PHOTOGRAPHY
BY BRYCE RICHTER





Surrounded by the roar of his P-47 Thunderbolt and buried in a bank of clouds that had cut visibility to less than 100 feet, 2nd Lt. Walter Stone was far from home.

It was October 23, 1943, and the whiteout in the sky had separated Buster — as he was known back in Andalusia, Alabama — from the rest of his Army Air Force 350th Fighter Squadron and the flight of B-26 Marauder bombers they were escorting to targets near Cambrai in Nazi-occupied northern France.

After the trip hundreds of miles down England's eastern coast, the leader of the bomber mission had scrubbed the attack run. It was pointless in the soup they encountered near Saint-Omer. They would regroup and head back across the English Channel.

Escorting bombers may have been the assignment Buster sought out from the beginning, when he was one of James and Lilla Stone's four sons who joined the armed forces as the United States entered World War II.

"One of his brothers was a navigator in the big bombers," says Mark Stone, the pilot's great-nephew. "In his mind, his brother was in one of those bombers he was escorting. Everybody in our family has heard stories like that about Buster."

He was 24, not far removed from his Pleasant Home School graduation and marriage to Miriam Boyette. Buster was well liked and respected, a young man who, like so many others, interrupted his life to do his duty for his country.

"My daddy and his daddy watched Uncle Buster kiss his wife goodbye there in Andalusia," Mark says. "My daddy watched his daddy embrace his brother and then put him on a plane to the war. They were the last family members to see him."

Unlike his three brothers, who would return safely, Uncle Buster would live on only in stories.

The UW team explores 2nd Lt. Walter "Buster" Stone's crash site near Saint-Omer, France, working 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week. Charles Konsitzke (bottom center) facilitates the MIA Project.

The last his squadron-mates heard from him, he was heading for England and would see them on the ground. But 2nd Lt. Stone never came out of the clouds.

His plane was assumed crashed, and he was declared missing in action. Eventually his name was added to the Tablets of the Missing at the Ardennes American Cemetery in Belgium and to the list of American fighters killed but still not recovered. But a piece of him stayed alive back in Alabama with Lilla and the large and tight-knit Stone family.

"His mother — we all called her Mama Stone — had a memorial for him put in the family cemetery plot by the church in Andalusia," says Mark. "She never gave up hope that Uncle Buster would come home. She talked about it until she died, and she was buried right by that memorial."

Buster was buried somewhere in France, but it would take nearly 75 years and a team of volunteers from the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project to prove Mama Stone right.

"The Least You Can Do"

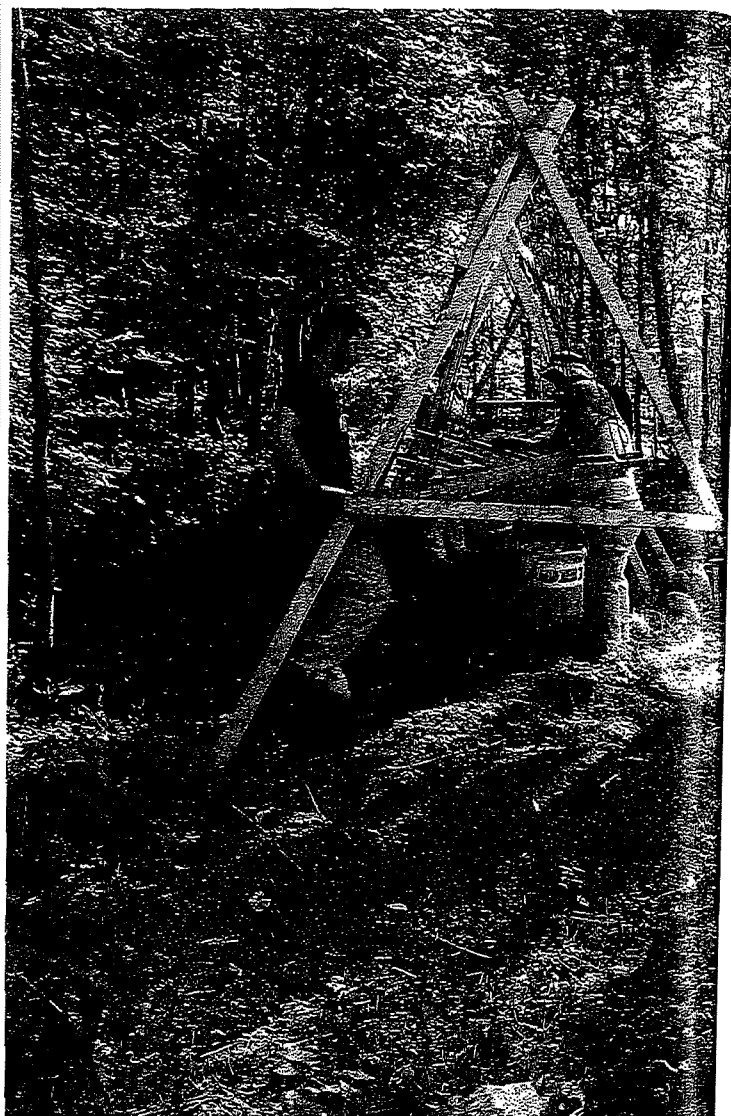
Organized by UW–Madison researchers skilled in identifying ancient and degraded genetic material, the MIA Project in 2013 helped the Department of Defense identify the remains of Private First Class Lawrence Gordon, who was killed in Normandy in a firefight with retreating Germans in 1944 and incorrectly buried as a German soldier.

In 2016 and 2017, the MIA Project broke ground near Buysscheure, France, as the first academic partner of the Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), the agency tasked with accounting for the country's missing service members. An MIA Project crew carefully excavated a farm field for several weeks in consecutive summers until they had conclusively identified the plane and then recovered the remains of another missing young World War II pilot, 1st Lt. Frank Fazekas.

"It's not the kind of thing you want to do just once," says Charles Konsitzke, associate director of the UW Biotechnology Center and facilitator for the MIA Project. "When you think about how many are still missing — more than 72,000 just from World War II — and how every day there are fewer of their friends and family members left to remember them, you feel a great sense of urgency to take on the next case."

In the spring and early summer of 2018, the UW team went to work on a pool of new cases. They would need to be ready to travel, to acquire permits to work on public or private land, and to have a plan in mind for a dig in a swamp or woods.

When they got the green light from DPAA to mount a search at Stone's suspected crash site on national forest land near Saint-Omer, the team was

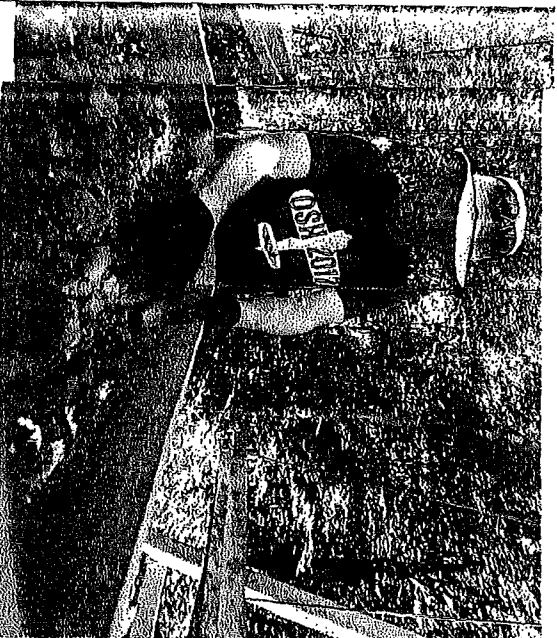


Ryan Wubben MD'97 (bottom left), medical director of UW Med Flight, works at a sifting station alongside the excavation site, while scientific-recovery expert Gregg Jamison MS'06, PhD'17 (bottom right) consults a book of historic military equipment.





Top left: UW-Madison volunteers Torrey Tiedeman x'20 (center) and Tristan Krause '18 (right) put their academic experiences in archaeology, anthropology, and history into practice. Below: Ella Arehrod, a student at Colorado College, sifts for artifacts.





Top: Tiedeman transports supplies to the dig site where investigators found Stone's identification tag. Bottom: The crew recovers machine guns from Stone's P-47 Thunderbolt, gnarled by the force and heat of the crash.

equipped with research and expertise across several academic disciplines. Volunteers like Tristan Krause '18, Torrey Tiedeman x'20, and Samantha Zinnen '19 would put their academic experiences in archaeology, anthropology, and history into practice during the mission. Gregg Jamison MS'06, PhD'17, a UW-Milwaukee at Waukesha anthropology professor, would be the scientific-recovery expert on site, directing a volunteer crew of UW-Madison students and staff, as well as anthropology students from Colorado College and volunteer veterans.

As in the Fazekas case, DPAA would be represented by lead forensic anthropologist William Belcher PhD'98, a professor of anthropology who brought one of his students from the University of Hawai'i-West O'ahu to the recovery.

After months of preparation, members of the UW-Madison MIA Project spent three weeks in the woods near Saint-Omer, carefully clearing trees and tons of earth from a site where, in 2017, DPAA investigators had found Walter Stone's identification tag.

Using picks and shovels they carried into the forest every day, hauling dirt by buckets to sifting stations they built alongside the excavation site, the MIA Project group worked 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week. They recovered identifying parts of Stone's plane — like .50 caliber machine guns, gnarled by the force and heat of the crash — along with the pilot's remains and some of his personal items.

"So much happens before you even start digging. And then it's just hard work. We were tired every day," says Krause. "But to be able to do that for someone who sacrificed so much is an honor. It feels like the least you can do."

"They Found Uncle Buster"

Mark Stone was on his way to the tractor supply store near Pensacola, Florida, in February when his father called and asked him if he was sitting down.

"He was so excited," Stone recalls. "And he said, 'They found Uncle Buster.' I just couldn't believe it."

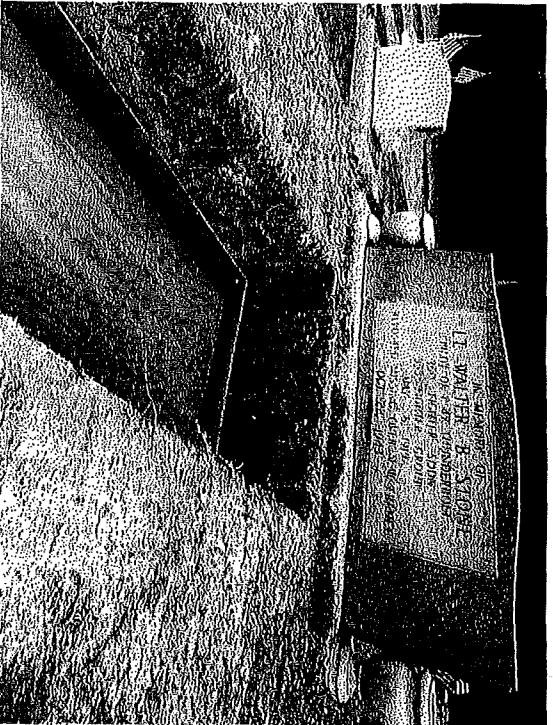
The Tablets of the Missing would be engraved with a rosette to mark the recovery, and Buster would finally come home to Andalusia. He was buried with military honors on May 11 — just days after what would have been his 100th birthday, and one day before Mother's Day — in the family plot near the ever-hopeful Mama Stone.

"It means so much that there are people out there in this country — from Wisconsin, from the military — that would work so hard to do something like this, to do right by someone who served his country, and for his family," says Mark Stone. "We owe them a lot. It makes us proud we're all Americans." ●

Chris Barncard writes about research at UW-Madison.



JULIE BENNETT (2)



Mark Stone with a photo of his great-uncle at the May II funeral service in Andalusia, Alabama (also pictured on pages 22 and 23). Walter "Buster" Stone was buried days after what would have been his 100th birthday at the marker erected by his mother. "She never gave up hope that Uncle Buster would come home," Mark says. "She talked about it until she died, and she was buried right by that memorial."