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What Remains: Bringing America's Missing Home from the Vietnam War

Sarah E. Wagner, 2019. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts - London England. ix + 288 pp. US \$29.95 (cloth: alk. paper), ISBN 9780674988347.

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A book with a story, history and emotion that encompasses the story of multiple United States military personnel and their families. I first heard of this book after attending a lecture by Dr. Sarah Wagner (Georgetown University) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in January of 2020. In her lecture, she spoke about the publication by telling the story of Lance Corporal Merlin Raye Allen who was Killed-in-Action and his body was not recovered for over four decades. While this book focuses on Lance Corporal Allen, he is just one of many discussed within these pages.

This story is more than just history of how the remains of these lost heroes were discovered and excavated. The book tells the story of how people in the United States feel about Military remains being labeled Missing-in-Action (MIA) or Killed-in-Action and Body-Not-Recovered (KIA BNR). This book also takes into account the feelings of the families and the different organizations that assisted in recovering their loved ones and bringing them home.

The book is composed of eight primary chapters with three subchapters. Each subchapter looks at events that happened in one particular year; 1967, 1970 and 2018. The publication begins by discussing the importance of retrieving the remains. It also takes the reader into the process of what considerations have to be taken into account. Some of these considerations include honoring the wishes of the fallen hero, the considerations of what the families want, and how to honor the hero. The middle of the book is split into different parts, one part is the recovery process with Dr. Freas. The second part describes how the process of identification takes place through forensic anthropology. Lastly, the third part explains what expectations are held by the public and by the professionals/government. The final chapters focus on the family's stories and what their role is in obtaining the remains, processing the loss, and the ultimate internment of the remains.

Dr. Wagner's research for the book included working with individuals from the Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii which now is part of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). Before DPAA, the organization was known as Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC). JPAC was under military command under the United States Pacific Command (PACOM). Dr. Wagner began her research while the organization was still known as JPAC. When JPAC became what is now known as the DPAA, the new organization set a goal of identifying 200 individuals a year. This goal would later be changed to 350 per year. The

increase is in part to having civilian staff as well as having more funding and opportunities. This is the area where forensic anthropologist, odontologists, and others work together in order to study remains in hopes of discovering their identification.

Another part of her research was to accompany the DPAA to the site of the helicopter crash that killed Lance Corporal Allen and four others with only three survivors. Throughout the writing, the reader learns about the history of the DPAA agency and the process of how families and friends feel about those who were missing. The book also goes on to explain how this has changed and shaped the perspective and processes on what to do with remains that are not recovered immediately from the battle field. The history has positive and negative points, but the most important is the end result in which the DPAA has changed Forensic Anthropology and the process of identifying its lost service members. The protocols and procedure put in place at DPAA have improved the process of identification and the techniques used. One example of this is DPAA's procedure for retrieving and analyzing DNA material from individuals remains that had been dusted with Lye. Remains would be covered in Lye when they were buried in order to keep the bones in good condition. A drawback of this method is that Lye made DNA identification impossible until this new technique was developed.

The bulk of her research is the ethnographic research. This research entailed talking to families and communities that have been affected by the deceased and missing military personnel. The main story of LCpl Allen and Private First Class Duwayne "Wotsy" Soulier takes place in Bayfield and Red Cliff Wisconsin. There are a few phrases that appear throughout the book and have significant meaning and history behind them. The first is "One who will never come home, the one who came home forty-six years later and the one who came home right away." This is relating to LCpl Allen, PFC Soulier, and PFC James Hessing all of them were from Bayfield and Red Cliff and the area surrounding. The phrase is visible at the Duwayne Soulier Memorial Post. Two other more well-known military phrases are "No man left behind" and "Bring them Back or Send us Back." All of these are explained within the book and give the history of what they mean and how they changed the United States.

Many people are familiar with the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. Though the original individual that was buried in the Vietnam War tomb has been identified, the symbolism of the tomb is still powerful to the nation as well as for those families and friends that have someone unaccounted-for. The Tomb is referenced many times throughout the book as well as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. The author talks about her own experiences at these places as well as the stories of military family members and friends of those that have someone missing.

While this is a short summary of her work and does not discuss everything talked about in the book. I believe that anyone interested in military history, forensic anthropology, politics relating to war, anthropology or that is just looking for a great read would find this piece of work to be interesting and thought provoking. The history and ethnographic accounts in this book are amazing. No one's story is the same and the author was able to seamlessly make connections between different military members and their families as well as seeing the differences in their personality is iconic. This book also highlights other resources one could look at for more information on POW/MIA meetings and events or for future research. While the author may not

be a forensic anthropologist, she does an amazing job of explaining what forensic anthropology is and the different processes that occur.

I found myself having an emotional connection to some of the stories told in the book, and was even in tears toward the end when the author quoted different families about their loved ones. My family has a strong military background as many served in different service branches. Currently I am studying forensic anthropology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a graduate student. I am also an intern at the DPAA laboratory in Omaha Nebraska, where I work in the lab assisting forensic anthropologists and others with identification of remains. Dr. Wagner's description of the CIL in Hawaii is incredibly accurate as I myself have been there for training. I greatly enjoyed this book and found the information knowledgeable and very rewarding; I would highly recommend taking the time to read this book!