

3 July 1946

MEMORANDUM TO: Chief, Memorial Branch, Quartermaster Section, Army
Forces, Middle Pacific, APO 958

I General

1. The 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company (less 1, 2, 3, Platoons) received orders from Headquarters United States Army Forces, Middle Pacific, APO 958, directing that they proceed to Tarawa for the purpose of disinterring, identifying, and reinterring the remains located in a master cemetery. Further training was instigated immediately for the personnel to engage in this operation. Four EM were sent to Lt. Henry Robinson, (DC) USNR, for instruction in tooth charting. These, and PhM/c Albert Peacher, Navy Dental NCO, were to handle the identification of remains through comparison of USN Forms H4 furnished by the Marine Corps with those taken from the remains located at Tarawa. Other men were given the final training in the recovery of remains, search for items of identification, and proper use of special equipment.

2. When the company received HAFMIDPAC movement order #24, dated 28 January 1946, preparations were made and the company embarked on the "USAT Lawrence Phillips" at Pier 40D Honolulu, T. H. on 21 February 1946 (See Photos #1 & 2). After embarking, the men were shown to their quarters on the forward hatch (See Photos #3 & 4).

a. The composition of the unit was as follows:

1	1st Lieutenant	- Commanding Officer
2	Lt. Commanders	- Catholic Chaplains who made the original landing on Tarawa on Invasion Day
1	Lt. Sr. Grade (DC) USNR	- Dental Officer
1	First Sgt	- Licensed embalmer and undertaker
1	T/Sgt	- Draftsman
1	PhM/c	- Dental Technician
1	S/Sgt	- Supply Sgt
2	S/Sgt	- Group Leaders
3	Sgts	- Section Leaders
1	Sgt	- Medical Department Tooth Charting
1	Cpl	- Medical Department Tooth Charting
6	Pfc	- Tooth Charting
1	Sgt	- Bull Dozer Operator
4	EM	- Clerks
25	EM	- Diggers

b. The "Lawrence Phillips" was a small freighter, 283 feet long, built in 1917. Its accommodations were crude for the number of men it carried, but it was the only available means of transportation to Tarawa. The men ate their meals in shifts as the mess room was too small to accommodate the whole company at one time. Bathing facilities were also limited. Salt water was used for showers and any washing done during the day. Fresh water was turned on for one hour only during meal times. In spite of the lack of facilities the morale of the company was very high at all times.

c. Before starting the voyage, Lieutenant Robinson felt that more personnel for tooth charting would be needed. Therefore, every morning after the vessel left Honolulu, PhM/c Peacher and the four men previously trained by Doctor Robinson conducted a class in tooth charting. About fifteen men attended, and at the end of the voyage, six students were dropped because it was felt they lacked proficiency. As a whole, every one was satisfied with the training and that the men knew their jobs thoroughly.

3. The "Lawrence Phillips" arrived at Betio, Tarawa on 4 March 1946 and dropped its anchor about 1300.

a. A re-arming boat came out from shore to take the personnel and personal baggage ashore. As the men came ashore, they were taken to fale's (these are larger huts made of pandanus thatch) (See Photo #5). These shacks were in filthy condition and the men spent about two days trying to clean them up and set up housekeeping.

b. The unloading of all the company equipment took about five days. It was brought up from the hatch on the ship's gear and transferred ashore. On shore, the equipment was taken to a larger Quonset which was to be our warehouse. Quite a lot of space was required to warehouse our equipment since there were caskets and supplies to reinter approximately a thousand remains.

4. While the ship was being unloaded, the writer spent some time looking over the scene of operations.

a. The first thing was to see where the Marine Graves (Cemeteries) were located and in what condition they were in. It was found that there were approximately 43 graves (cemeteries) containing from one body up to 400 in the Tarawa Atoll. (See Photo #16).

b. The most important operation before starting the disinterring and identification of remains was to find a spot for a master cemetery in which to reinter them. A suitable spot was found on the western end of the island, (Photo #6 & 7) near the chapel. Work clearing the site of palm stumps was started on 9 March with the use of a D7 Dozer. This dozer was in such poor condition that after about four days it broke down and had to be removed from the scene of operations. Since there were no mechanics or parts available with which to repair the dozer, the work was completed by hand.

c. After inspecting the Army Garrison Forces' heavy equipment (dozer, carryall, tractor, and trucks) it was found that little could be expected from use of it. The Garrison Force had been unable to maintain them properly for some time, as properly trained personnel and replacement parts were non-existent and it appeared as though most of the work would have to be done by manpower alone.

d. After reaching the conclusion that personnel of the company was inadequate for all the labor required, arrangements were made to hire natives to help with the digging.

e. Before the work was started on the "Master Cemetery", a conference was held with the Army Garrison Force Commander, the British Administrator and the Commanding Officer of the 604th Graves Registration Company. The object was to get concurrence on the use of the land to be used for the "Master Cemetery". Suitable arrangements were made and the land acquired at no expense to the government. (See Inclosure 2). At this conference, plans were also worked out for disinterring American Dead from Apamama and Nauru. It was planned to use the Base Airplane (Photo #8) for transportation in those operations. The British agreed to look into the condition of the airstrips on those islands and inform the Army Garrison Force Commander if they were adequate.

5. The Tarawa operation was completed on 20 May 1946. During the operation, about fifty per cent of the bodies previously reported buried on that Atoll were found, and of that number, only about 58% were identified. The explanation for this discrepancy will be found under Part II, "Operations".

II Operations

1. Grave #33

a. Grave #33 was the Marine designation for this cemetery. From a rough count, there should have been approximately 400 bodies interred here.

b. This cemetery was rectangular in shape and was divided into four plots.

- (1) It was expected to start operations from the left front side of cemetery and work across it, row by row, but at this point our difficulties began.
- (2) After two days of excoavating no bodies had been recovered. This created much concern. Father O'Neill, who buried Marine dead on this spot shortly after the invasion, finally made the suggestion that we see if traces of the original rows could be found.

- (3) Originally, the remains were buried side by side in three rows. These rows were supposed to be diagonal to certain tree stumps. By a series of prospect excavations and narrow trenches, the middle row was found first. Later the other two rows were found. These rows were also diagonal to the way the cemetery was laid out (See attached photos #9, 10, & 11).
- (4) Another discrepancy found in this cemetery was that instead of the 400 remains reportedly buried therein, only 129 were recovered. The cemetery was checked for more remains by a series of cross trenches and prospect excavations. After several days of fruitless search, the cemetery was declared officially closed.

c. Identification of these remains was almost impossible. The original markers placed by Father O'Neill had been removed by who ever had erected the new markers in the cemetery. The existing markers had no relation to the position of the remains.

- (1) Very few of the remains had any means of identification such as Regulation identification tags, shoes, or names stenciled on their web equipment and ponchos.
- (2) The identification tags found were almost useless to us, for the chemical reaction of the coral had corroded them until they were illegible. It appeared that the lettering had been etched or lightly stamped into the tags. In addition, most of the tags were almost disintegrated when found by us.
- (3) Tooth charts were not of much value to us as was originally estimated. It appeared that additional dental work had been done since the original charts were made with no record kept of it. All these difficulties made our task much harder.

d. The remains were almost completely decomposed. Skulls, skeletal and long bones, web equipment, shoes, and ordnance equipment were the only things found.

- (1) Most of the remains had been buried as they fell without cartridges and hand grenades being removed (See Photo #12). The grenades constituted a hazardous obstacle, for the operating handles were almost disintegrated. In fact, the handles did come off some of the grenades as they were removed from the bodies. These grenades, when removed were disposed of in the sea. One actually detonated but the writer does not recall in which cemetery it was found. They were removed by T/Sgt Galluzzi and Father O'Neill for it was felt that the grenades were dangerous and that

these two men would exercise proper caution in the disposal of them.

2. Grave #26

a. This was a five row cemetery with 119 Markers.

b. It appeared to be a formal cemetery, well defined, and fairly well kept.

c. However, the same situation that existed in Grave #33 was found here. We dug under the markers, and again, no remains were found. Father Kelly told us that when he buried the dead, they were arranged in three rows. We then dug a narrow trench across the length of the cemetery and in that way located the three rows as recalled by Father Kelly. The next step was to dig up the three rows containing the remains. Enclosed are photographs #13 & 14 which show where the remains were found.

d. Identification difficulties were exactly the same as those in Cemetery 33. Identification tags were found in some instances. However, the tooth charts taken from the remains did not check with those furnished by Marine Corps for the person whose identification tags were found. It seems that the Marines had traded identification tags for some reason unknown. This was a hindrance in our task of positively identifying the remains located.

e. Unexploded grenades were also found on the remains in this cemetery. These were disposed of by Father Kelly, S/Sgt Hillman, and the writer. While we were working here a light Japanese mine was also found. This was disposed of by 1st/Sgt Gebhart.

f. In this cemetery 123 bodies were recovered. After checking thoroughly for other remains and finding none, the cemetery was declared closed on 26 March 1946.

3. Grave #25

a. The layout of this cemetery was in the same formal pattern as Graves #26 and #33.

b. In view of our previous experiences, it was decided not to waste time and dig under the markers initially. A trench was run across the cemetery and the original burial trenches were found running at almost right angles within the cemetery (See Photo #15).

c. As in Graves #26 and #33, most of the identification tags were illegible. Some had no information on them at all. Sample tags were forwarded to the C. I. D. Honolulu, T. H. and to the OQMG, Washington. The tags were returned with the statement that no printing could be detected thereon.

d. This cemetery was under supervision of Father Kelly and S/Sgt Hillman. The work was finished and the cemetery closed on 2 April 1946.

4. Buariki Operation

a. The group going to Buariki to disinter the 34 remains on that island departed in an LCVP on 3 April 1946.

b. The party consisted of nine enlisted men and four natives with Lt. Eisensmith in charge. For this operation, rations for two days and 20 gallons of water were taken. It was felt that unless unforeseen circumstances occurred, the remains in the cemetery could be exhumed in about a day and a half.

c. As the party arrived at Buariki at low tide, everything had to be trans-shipped from the LCVP to a rubber life raft and thus to the shore.

d. As it was three o'clock before everything was brought shore, it was decided not to begin operations until the next day. Thursday morning the party with an additional five or six natives from the near by village went out to the cemetery to begin exhumations.

e. In this cemetery all but two remains were located under the markers. It required a half day of searching to locate those two.

f. In two instances the remains were buried under the wrong markers. This error was apparent as one of the men was found with an identification tag attached that did not agree with the marker. However, all remains were positively identified by tooth charts.

g. The operation was completed on 5 April 1946.

5. Isolated Burials

a. These graves were scattered all over the island. They were in front of fales (native type huts) warehouses, and elsewhere over the island as shown on the burial chart for Betio (See Photo #16).

b. These isolated burials were supposed to contain from one to eight bodies. Each of these graves was outlined in white concrete moulds and further marked by chains hanging from posts (See Photo #17).

c. In the disinterring of these isolated burials, it was found that many of the graves did not contain all the remains reported buried therein. All the remains located were removed to the Lone Palm Cemetery for reburial.

d. Disinterment of all the isolated burials was completed by 5 April 1946.

6. Grave #14

a. Grave #14 was a monument cemetery. The monument consisted of a large cross set in concrete with chains hung from posts set in the corners.

b. Work was started on 8 April 1946. Much difficulty was experienced in finding the remains in this cemetery. Trenches and prospect excavations were dug all around the vicinity but no remains were found.

c. A dozer was used without success. Finally, it was decided to try under the monument itself. A heavy log chain was attached to the monument and it was dragged out to the beach.

d. The remains were found under the monument. However, only 41 of the 42 reported remains were located. The area was thoroughly searched but no other remains were recovered. This cemetery was closed on 17 April 1946.

7. Grave #11

a. This cemetery was also a monument cemetery. However, it was quite large and shaped like a giant cross (See Photo #18).

b. Before operations started, the Garrison Force Commander made the statement that it would be hard to find the remains in this cemetery because it was primarily a "Memorial," which proved to be true. Several bodies were found on the second day, but no more were located until 17 April 1946.

c. The next remains located were two feet below the water line. Work was suspended and a radio sent to Memorial Branch to ship a water pump by air.

d. When the work recommenced, another problem presented itself. The remains were buried in what was evidently a shell hole as shown on Inclosure 18.

e. The usual difficulties in establishing identification were present in this cemetery.

f. The cemetery was closed on 13 May 1946.

8. Territorial Operation

a. This operation started on 9 April 1946 with Father O'Neill and 1st/Sgt Gebhart in charge.

b. The personnel for this operation consisted of 14 men and three natives. It started to rain about an hour after the LCVP departed and continued for two days, during which time the disinterment work

proceeded.

c. There were 24 bodies buried in the cemetery, one of which was that of a Navy Commander in a steel casket. All the remains except that of the Commander were brought back to Betio on 11 April 1946. The Commander's body could not be brought back because a cutting torch was needed to open the casket. Several days later another group went out and spent the entire day recovering the remains. The steel casket was $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick and covered another casket made of wood. The remains had been embalmed and the formaldehyde fumes almost blinded the men handling the cutting torch.

d. Contrary to all the other cemeteries (or graves) on Tarawa, there was no doubt about identification of these remains. Index cards with all pertinent information were found buried in each of the caskets.

9. Grave #18

a. Work started on this monument cemetery on 8 April 1946.

b. The remains were buried under the monument and it took several days to find them.

c. There were supposedly 20 bodies buried there, but only 19 were located, despite a thorough search of the area.

d. About half of the remains had identification tags and the majority of the rest were identified by tooth charts.

e. Here again live grenades were encountered and disposed of in the ocean.

f. The cemetery was closed on 11 April 1946.

10. Grave #27

a. This was a monument cemetery located outside of the large Quonset which was used as the Base theater. The monument was near the dock of the boat basin. The work started on 12 April 1946. There were supposed to be 40 bodies buried somewhere around the monument. (See Photo #19)

b. Work was begun by removing the monument and digging under it to a depth of seven feet. After digging up the whole area enclosed by the monument and not finding anything, explorative excavations were started throughout the area. At the same time trenches were started in front of the four large Quonsets in the area around the boat basin, but all this work was in vain. Chaplains Kelly and O'Neill went up into the Jap Tower on the boat basin dock with the continue searches. The area around the barber shop and the area along both sides of the road was dug up but no remains, no remnants of equipment, or any other debris that would have indicated a burial place were located.

c. Work on Grave #27 was finally abandoned on 1 May 1946. In view of the negative results of the searches, it was felt that this was only a memorial site and there was no value in continuing the search in that area.

11. Grave in Front of British Wireless Station

a. This was also a monument cemetery and work was started on 16 April 1946.

b. The marker indicated that there were 16 bodies buried in the vicinity of the monument. After the monument was removed only 14 of the 16 reported burials were located.

c. After thoroughly searching the area and finding nothing more, work ceased on 18 April 1946.

d. Almost all the remains in this cemetery were identified by identification tags and tooth charts.

12. Apamama (Abemama) Operation

a. This operation was to have been done with the aid of a C-47 that had been assigned to the Garrison Force Headquarters. However, the C-47 was returned to Oahu before we were able to begin the operation. When the time for the operation came, there was no air transportation available.

b. The British Resident approached the writer on 7 May with the offer of taking a party to Apamama on His Majesty's launch "Margaret". When queried as to the cost, the British Resident replied that there would be no charges involved.

c. A party led by 1st/Sgt Gebhart departed Betio on 8 May 1946 for Apamama (Abemama) on the "Margaret." The "Margaret" was a 60 foot motor launch with a speed of four knots. She arrived at the destination on 9 May 1946 during the late afternoon.

d. Work was started on the morning of 10 May 1946 and 11 remains were recovered from the 13 graves. The other two were memorial graves. The party returned to Betio on the "Margaret" 11 May 1946.

13. Crash of Kwajalein C-47

a. On the morning of 24 April 1946, the C-47 from Kwajalein came in bearing a replacement for Cpl Robert Tingle, our Marine Photographer and also the water pump for Grave #11.

b. About 1245 the plane took off on the return trip. At 1300 a cloud of oily black smoke was noticed about 20 miles from Betio.

Immediately everyone seemed to know that the C-47 had crashed and a rescue boat was dispatched carrying the Army Garrison Force doctor, several members of the 604th, the boat operator, and the writer.

o. When we arrived on the scene of the crash, it was noted that native outrigger canoes arrived before us. These natives had recovered the bodies of Lt. Col. Tyler and Capt. Poteat. The bodies were transferred to the Base re-arm boat where they were given an examination by the doctor and declared dead.

d. The re-arm boat started circling the area of the crash looking for other survivors and any property that might be floating. About an hour later the body of Capt. Siedenburg was recovered and he was also declared dead.

e. After circling the vicinity of the crash until 1600, it was decided to return to the Base. Before returning, a sea marker was dropped over the sunken plane.

f. The following morning an investigating committee flew in from Kwajalein. They questioned witnesses and made arrangements to fly divers in to recover the other bodies from the plane. When the divers arrived and operations commenced only part of one body was recovered. The others had disappeared.

g. As no embalming equipment was available on the island, 1st/Sgt Gebhart, a licensed embalmer, aided by PML/c Peacher gathered together some crude equipment and embalmed the three bodies (See Photos #20 & 21).

h. The remains were given a military funeral with the entire personnel of the Army Garrison Force that of the 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company, and the investigating committee acting as guard of honor. At the conclusion of the ceremony, three volleys were fired and taps was sounded. The British were also represented and their flag was lowered during the funeral.

i. The investigating committee returned to Kwajalein on 1 May 1946 taking Fathers Kelly and O'Neill, who were returning for release from active duty.

14. Some of the graves on western shore were under the water due to the erosion of the shoreline. The original map was checked by the navigator of the Base C-47. Because of this situation, no remains were recovered from the cemeteries reported to have been in that area.

15. Lone Palm Cemetery

a. The site of the new cemetery is to the rear of the chapel (Photo #24) and is laid out due east and west by magnetic compass. This

site was chose because the land was fairly high and was more or less removed from the normal traffic of the Army Garrison Force.

b. A statement signed by the British Administrator relieving the U. S. Government of monetary liabilities for the use of the land occupied by the cemetery is attached to this report (Inclosure #2).

c. Work was started on the cemetery 9 March 1946, by removing stumps from the ground (see Photo #6). After the Dozer broke down this work was completed by hand. When all the stumps were removed, a carryall was used to level the cemetery.

d. After the site was cleared and leveled (See Photo #7), the work of surveying and laying out of the cemetery was completed. When this work was done, natives were hired to dig trenches for the reburials. (See Photo #24).

e. After all remains had been tooth charted and all means of identification exhausted, the skulls, of the unidentified were photographed. The remains were then reburied with full military honors in the Lone Palm Cemetery. An identification tag and a copy of the Report of Reinterment (WD QMC Form 1042) were placed in a sealed bottle and buried with each remains. A marker with an identification tag and a 2" x 4" metal bag showing the name, rank, and serial number of the identified was erected at the head of each grave. The unidentified remains were designated as "Unknown X ____". *tag?*

f. The new cemetery was completed on 20 May 1946. A flag pole was erected and a chain fence was placed around the perimeter. Young palm trees were planted outside the fence.

16. Identification

a. Tooth charts were made in every instance possible. Occasionally, remains found with some identification were later declared as "Unknowns", when tooth charts were compared. Other remains found without any identification were positively identified through comparison of tooth charts. Also, many of those found with some identification were conclusively identified by comparison of tooth charts. Full particulars will be found in the attached report which was submitted by the Naval Dental Officer who accompanied us on the operation.

b. Three photographs, one front, one right, and one left view, were taken of each unidentified skull located. These photographs and negatives were forwarded to The Quartermaster General, Washington D. C. Their experts will attempt to reconstruct the features through which it is hoped that the identity of many of the present Unknowns will be established.

c. Some personal property was found with the remains. This property was badly deteriorated and as no equipment was on hand with which to reconstruct the information, all effects were forwarded to Casualty

Section, Marine Corps Headquarters, Washington, D. C. It is believed that experts there may be able to determine some of the original owners which will aid in the positive identification of the Unknowns.

17. Burials

a. All burials on Betio, Tarawa Atoll, were in accordance with Army Regulations with the exception of the firing squad and bugler. Blank ammunition was unavailable for the firing squad, and there was no bugle or bugler available for "taps". However, Chaplains Kelly and O'Neill conducted appropriate religious service (See Photos #22 & 23). Temporary caskets were used for each reburial and the remains wrapped in a blanket. (See Photo #25). At all times, the remains were handled with great care and accorded the reverence that they so justly deserve.

III Conclusions

1. Methods of Identification

a. The permanent identification tags used by the Marine Corps were found to have deteriorated greatly in the coral. The lettering was inadequate, for it could not be brought out by expert criminologists. (See true copy of letter from OQMG).

b. The temporary tags were of a zinc base, plated with brass, on which the information was etched. These tags were of little value to us as far as identification material.

c. The web equipment buried with the remains was in excellent condition but no names were found stenciled thereon. The only exceptions were names stenciled on a few ponchos.

2. Burials

It seems that those killed in action during the "Tarawa Operation" were buried without any forethought. According to observation, the idea was to get them underground. It appeared that those who followed were concerned with creating beautiful cemeteries on the surface. These "cemeteries" were placed without any relation to the actual burials.

IV Recommendations

1. It is recommended:

a. That identification tags be made of stainless steel, monel metal, or some other non-corrosive metal. The letters on the tags should be embossed, and not etched. This will facilitate identification at a later date if and when disinterment is found necessary.

b. All web and personal equipment be stenciled with name, rank and serial number.

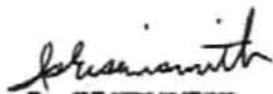
c. That each and every servicemen wear identification tags around his neck, and either an identification bracelet on his wrist or an identification card on his person. In this way some identification will be found if the person is killed and dismembered.

d. A unified system of burial procedure for all services should be followed.

e. All burial reports forms should be the same for all services.

f. All service personnel should have some GRS training. By doing this, it is felt that the conditions found on Tarawa would not recur.

g. That a health record similar to the one used for Navy and Marine Corps personnel be used for all Army personnel to follow the individual throughout the service just as the service record or officers' 86-1. ^{or 66-2} By doing so, the accompanying tooth chart may be used as a valuable means of identification in case of accidental death or battle casualty.



I. EISENSMITH
1st Lt., QMC
CO, 604th QM GRS Co

31 May 1946

SUBJECT: Dental Officer's Report on Identification Operation
at Tarawa

TO : Chief, Memorial Branch,
Quartermaster Section,
Army Forces, Middle Pacific,
APO 958

1. Identification and verification of bodies by dental chart comparison was extensively used in this project, and was found to be a satisfactory method. The Navy H-4 Forms (dental charts) of all Marine and Navy personnel who were supposedly buried on Tarawa and Abemama, and also the forms of those buried at sea, missing, and dying of wounds as a result of the action at Tarawa, were obtained from the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Washington, D. C., and were carried there to be used as an aid in the identification of the aforementioned personnel.

2. The undersigned Dental Officer received orders from the Fourteenth Naval District which placed him on temporary additional duty with the Memorial Branch, Oahu Quartermaster Service, AFMIDPAC, for the accomplishment of this project. Similar orders were issued for a Dental corpsman with the rate of Pharmacist's Mate 1/c. Before leaving Oahu this corpsman assisted the officer in training twelve Army enlisted men in dental charting. These men were intensively trained for eight weeks, and proved to be quite efficient in their duties of examining and recording dental conditions. These men were selected from the 604th GRS Company on the basis of AGCT test.

3. The duties of the personnel in the dental organization were as follows: The Dental Officer was in charge, the greater part of his work being to compare field dental charts with government dental charts. The Navy Dental corpsman was placed in direct supervision of all field dental corpsmen, and in addition was responsible for the collection of all Form H-4's and Form 1042's at the end of each working day. The duties of the field dental corpsmen were those of cleaning, examining, and charting teeth of the exhumed bodies.

4. Materials which were used in this project besides the government H-4 Forms already mentioned included 2,000 blank H-4 Forms obtained from the Naval Medical Supply Depot, Aiea Hospital, T. H.

BASIC: Dental Officer's Report on Identification Operation at Tarawa,
31 May 1946 - Cont'd.

and usual office equipment. Also burial maps and rosters of the dead, which were obtained from Washington, were referred to constantly.

5. The procedure used for the identification and/or verification of each recovered body was as follows: The 604th GRS Company was divided into groups for the purpose of disinterment and preliminary identification work. In each of these groups were two dental corpsmen, one to make examinations of teeth, and the other to record on a blank H-4 Form, the dental conditions found. In the field, when one of the exhumation groups uncovered a body, the dental corpsmen would immediately obtain the skull, thoroughly clean the teeth of all dirt, and proceed to make the dental examination and record of condition found on one of the blank H-4 Forms. At the same time, other men in the group would fill out a WD QMC Form 1042 (Report of Burial) right at the grave site. The Form 1042 contained general information peculiar to the grave in question, and the Form H-4 contained specific dental information peculiar to the body in question. Therefore, so that nothing would be overlooked which may have led to positive identification, both forms were sent to the Dental Officer who correlated the information. The Dental Officer then proceeded to look for the Government H-4 Form which had the same name on it as the field record had. When this form was found, it was compared with the field record, and identification was thereby verified or disproved. In the event that there was no clue as to identification, and there was present even the slightest unusual dental condition, a search was made through each record of the bodies buried in the particular cemetery or location, comparing each record with the field dental record in question. If no identification was effected in this manner, this field record was temporarily laid aside. At the end of the project, all remaining government dental records were divided among the eight most proficient dental corpsmen, and each was examined for a possible match with the remaining field dental records in question. Nineteen bodies were identified in this manner.

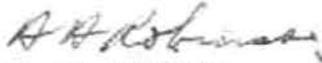
6. The government H-4 Forms were separated into individual cemeteries and locations, each of which was alphabetized and appropriately labeled. This index system was accomplished by using the maps of each cemetery obtained from Washington, as a guide. In locations where no markers were present or no map had been made, names of the deceased were taken from memorial plaques in some instances, if there was one erected in the general area. A slight modification of the process just described was necessary when initials were found on the personal effects of the man; for example, on his billfold, ring, et cetera. In this case, the roster of the dead previously obtained from Washington was referred to, and when a man with the same initials was found on the roster, his government dental chart would be compared to the field chart in question. When identification tags were found with a body the same procedure was used. In a few instances, it was definitely

proven by dental chart comparison that the tag found with or near the remains was not the correct tag for the remains in question. As will be noted, it was necessary for the Dental Officer to have had access to this information which was placed on the Form 1042, and this is the reason that all such forms were required to pass through his office.

7. An important fact that was considered in the identification process was the similarity of many dental records. This is due to the fact that some teeth in the mouth are found to be decayed, missing, or filled in a far greater number than others. In the process of identification, unless there was some dental peculiarity, no matter how slight, it followed that positive identification was impossible. For this reason, many remains were declared Unknown. There was also to be considered the fact of error in recoding of both the field chart and the government chart in some instances. However, as far as is known, this factor was negligible. In the field, various conditions of the teeth and jaws were present. There were remains found with one or more teeth missing from the jaws. In many instances the teeth were found adjacent to the skull. In other instances the teeth were not recovered. Another common condition found was that parts of one or both jaws were missing. Several skulls were found with one jaw missing, and a few remains were exhumed for which no skull was found, even after exhaustive searching in and around the area in which the remains was located. In cases where any teeth at all were recovered, H-4 Forms were made out, and all the details noted. In order to keep records in order, H-4 Forms were made out for those remains for which no skull could be recovered, and the details so noted.

8. The result of using this method of dental chart comparison was that 117 bodies were positively identified by dental charts alone, and 137 bodies were identified by correlation of other information with dental charts. The identity of 40 remains was definitely disproven after other information had led to a tentative identification.

9. The result of the entire operation was that only 49% of the bodies said to be interred in Tarawa Atoll was actually located. The reasons for this were: (a) In the large cemeteries, it was found that remains were buried in rows diagonally to the rows of markers, and names on the markers therefore could not be depended upon for identification of the remains; (b) In other large cemeteries, there were many markers present in a given area, but no remains could be found in the area. This was also true of many individual grave; (c) There were said to be more remains present on Tarawa, but they were impossible to locate because the burial places were not marked in anyway.


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