

Mansfield Catholic helps give unclaimed & forgotten veterans a dignified resting place

By Paula Wright

Mansfield, MO

Daniel Poirier, a Faithful Navigator with the Knights of Columbus, MSgt, USAFR (Ret), and member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Mansfield, has spent the past 15 years as a volunteer of the Missing in America Project. A national organization, the Missing in America Project's (MIAP) purpose is "to locate, identify, and inter the unclaimed cremated remains of American veterans through the joint efforts of private, state, and federal organizations. To provide honor, respect, and dignity to those who have served this country by securing a final resting place for these forgotten heroes."

This comprehensive project requires many volunteer hours, and it is a labor of love.



VETERAN PRAYS—A US veteran bowed his head in prayer at a Memorial Day Mass held at Resurrection Cemetery, Springfield. A Mansfield parishioner, Daniel Poirier, is involved with the Missing in America Project, the mission of which is to locate, identify, and inter unclaimed cremated remains of American veterans through the efforts of private, state, and federal organizations. *(The Mirror)*

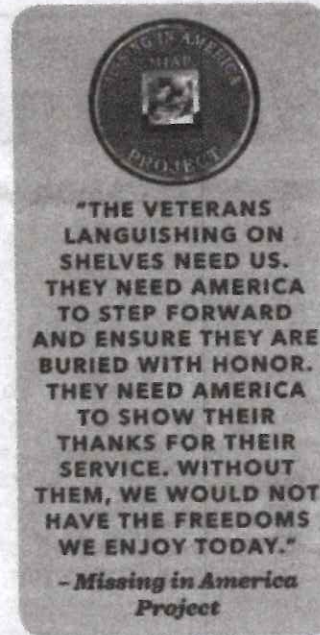
It was in 2015, during a national cemetery wreath-laying event with the Knights of Columbus in Georgia, Poirier noticed a grave marked with "MIAP." Not knowing what it meant,

he researched and found the Missing in America Project and immediately felt drawn to help them in their efforts.

"I specifically remember the first funeral I participated in with MIAP, it was in Blairsville, Georgia. We were bringing a forgotten veteran home to his final resting place," Poirier said. "Word had gotten out. We were given a police escort. There were people on the side of the road along the route and on bridges with flags. It was incredible to see such a great showing of gratitude."

In Fort Leonard Wood Missouri State Veterans Cemetery, Waynesville, MO, a World War I (WWI) veteran who had been unclaimed for over 60 years received a funeral with full military honors along with a post-Vietnam Navy Seaman Recruit, ensuring a dignified

final resting place for both vets. Another success story Poirier shared was the MIAP finding, identifying, and securing a final resting place not only for a WWI veteran who was found in San Diego, but also for his six-year-old son,



whose remains had been unclaimed for years in Seattle. His remains were also transported to San Diego so that father and son could be placed together.

According to their site, during their 17-year history, MIAP has identified 8,253 veterans and eligible dependent remains and interred 8,101 Veterans.

"Each veteran who is located and receives a burial is a success story. It is estimated there are around 50,000 veterans whose unclaimed

remains are waiting to be found," said Poirier, "in storage units and on the side of the road."

Sadly, the homeless population is a contributor for many veterans' remains that are unclaimed and unidentified.

"We are always looking for volunteers to help us contact places where unclaimed remains of veterans may be found," said Poirier, who recently was named as the MIAP State Coordinator in Missouri, "to help set up and coordinate funerals and burial arrangements, and to conduct research to help identify the veterans."

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Poirier by Email at miaga30512@gmail.com or by telephone at (770) 377-2377. For more information about the Missing in America Project, visit www.miap.us. @TM