

Airman Lost in 1942 Crash is Identified

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of a U.S. Army Air Forces airman, missing since 1942, have been identified and will soon be returned to his family for burial.

He is Aviation Cadet Ernest G. Munn, U.S. Army Air Forces, of St. Clairsville, Ohio. He will be buried in May in Colerain, Ohio.

Representatives from the Army met with Munn's next-of-kin to explain the recovery and identification process, and to coordinate interment with military honors on behalf of the Secretary of the Army.

Munn was one of four men aboard a routine navigation training flight that departed Mather Field, Calif., on Nov. 18, 1942. Their AT-7 Navigator aircraft carried about five hours of fuel, and when the plane did not return to base, a search was initiated. It was suspended about a month later with no results.

In 1947, several hikers on Darwin Glacier in the Sierra Nevada mountain range discovered the wreckage of the AT-7 aircraft. Fragmentary, skeletal remains found at the site were buried as a group in the Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, Calif.

Then in October 2005, other hikers in the Sierra Nevadas discovered frozen human remains, circumstantial evidence and personal effects of an aircrew member. Park rangers from Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and a forensic anthropologist from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) recovered the remains. They were sent to the JPAC laboratory in Hawaii and identified as Cadet Leo M. Mustonen, one of the four men aboard the AT-7 aircraft.

In 2007, two other hikers found human remains near the 2005 discovery site. Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA in the identification of a second individual from the 1942 crew, Cadet Ernest G. Munn.

CDR Diana Sorrentino, USNR