

KOREAN WAR AND

U. S. ARMY
CAMP MCCOY WIS.
MAIN GATE

REMEMBERING THE WAR 70 YEARS LATER

SPECIAL INSERT TO THE REAL MCCOY

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2023

HOME AFTER 73 YEARS: Fort McCoy Soldiers pay honors to Korean War hero in local community

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Pfc. Charles Dickman was only 17 years old when he died fighting in the Korean War on July 12, 1950, as a heavy weapons infantryman with Company M, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. But he never made it home.

“He was reported missing in action on July 12, 1950, near the town of Chochiwon, South Korea, as his regiment engaged in a series of delaying actions to buy time for reinforcements and resupply as they withdrew from the area to avoid being surrounded by North Korean forces,” a Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, or DPAA, news release states. “He was not seen to fall in battle, and he was not reported to be a prisoner of war. After regaining control of Chochiwon in the fall of 1950, the Army began recovering remains from the area and temporarily interring them at the United Nations Military Cemetery (UNMC) Taejon.

“However, Pfc. Dickman’s remains were not identified among those recovered from the area, and in 1953, the Department of the Army issued him a presumptive finding of death. The unidentified remains from UNMC were sent to Hawaii where they were buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the Punchbowl, as Korean War Unknowns,” the release states.

“In July 2018, the DPAA proposed a seven-phase plan to disinter 652 Korean War Unknowns from the Punchbowl,” the release further states. “As part of the second phase of this Korean War Disinterment Project, one set of unidentified remains was sent to the DPAA laboratory for further study. The laboratory analysis and the totality of the circumstantial evidence available established the remains as those of Pfc. Dickman.”

On June 20, 2023, the DPAA announced they had identified the remains Pfc. Dickman officially. And on Oct. 21, 2023, finally, Pfc. Dickman made it home to Cashton, Wis.

A funeral mass was set up Oct. 21 in Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Cashton with hundreds of people in attendance. And just down the road, setting up for the graveside service for Dickman at Sacred Heart Cemetery was a team of Soldiers from Fort McCoy who would form a U.S. Army Funeral Honors Team to fold the U.S. flag.

This team included Maj. Randy Downs, company commander of U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy Headquarters and Headquarters Company; Maj. Michael Ball, Deputy Staff Judge Advocate for Fort McCoy; 1st Sgt. Jacob Pattison, first sergeant for U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy Headquarters and Headquarters Company; and Sgt. 1st Class Jason Henderson and Staff Sgt. Nathan Miller, also both with U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

During the funeral mass, Father Michael Klos of Sacred Heart spoke to those who gathered, noting that the Soldier who was missing from his community for so long was “having come home at long last ... after 73 years.”

Most of Dickman’s immediate family are now deceased, including his parents and many of his siblings. However, a surviving family member, a sister — Patricia Filut — was there with many nieces and nephews of Dickman to remember him. Klos mentioned that all of the family would be glad to know this day had come where Charles had returned home.

“It is a good and beautiful thing for us to be gathered here today,” Klos said. “To all (who) would be in this a wonderful moment for the family to have closure. They would remember him so well.”

In the funeral mass, the Soldier was honored in a way that was likely long past the time it should have been as the priest had noted, but community and family members were abundant in doing their best to honor Dickman on his homecoming.

After the mass was completed, the entire group of people who was in the church made their way to the cemetery. This included numerous members of Cashton’s Dickman-Spaeth Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #8584. That’s right. The post is named in part after Pfc. Dickman.

At the cemetery, people filed in after parking along the road. The cemetery is less than a mile down a county highway from the church, and people had to park mostly along the highway. The procession was long and led by bikers associated with the VFW post.

The service at the cemetery didn’t take a long time but was likely the most moving. There, Klos spoke more about Dickman as the entire crowd of people closely circled the grave site. Nearby stood



The U.S. Army Funeral Honors Team from U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy completes the graveside flag-folding duty for Pfc. Charles Dickman during the graveside service Oct. 21 for Dickman in Cashton, Wis., at Sacred Heart Cemetery.



Maj. Randy Downs with the U.S. Army Funeral Honors Team from U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy presents U.S. flag to 93-year-old Patricia Filut, the sister of Pfc. Charles Dickman, during the graveside service Oct. 21 for Dickman in Cashton. Dickman was only 17 years old when he died fighting in the Korean War on July 12, 1950, as a heavy weapons infantryman with Company M, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division.

veterans at attention with U.S. flags blowing in the cold breeze.

Also nearby was the U.S. Army Funeral Honors Team from Fort McCoy. Downs was standing slightly away from them.

Once Klos completed speaking, buglers played taps in honor of Dickman. Following that, the U.S. Army Funeral Honors Team walked to the casket and began to take off the U.S. flag and fold it.

As they silently and slowly folded the flag, the entire crowd was silent, and the only thing heard was the wind blowing.

Once the flag was completely folded, Downs, as the team commander, brought the flag to Dickman’s sister Patricia and presented it to her. Soon after, the service was over.

Downs said participating in the event was an honor for the whole team.

“Speaking on behalf of our team, please know it was truly an honor to support a fellow brother in arms, Pfc. Charles Dickman’s homecoming and transition to his final resting place on this great nation’s soil,” Downs said.

“It gives our team peace and joy knowing his sister received closure at 93 years old, and he received the honor he deserves,” Downs said. “It serves as a reminder to remember and appreciate those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for the values we hold dear. His story is one I will remember and share for the rest of my life.”

Besides being remembered with his namesake on the VFW post in Cashton, DPAA also stated that Pfc. Dickman is memorialized on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

The news release about his remains being found

also stated, “His name is also inscribed on the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C., which was updated in 2022 to include the names of the fallen.”

In addition to his funeral on Oct. 21, throughout the state of Wisconsin, flags of the United States and the state of Wisconsin were flown at half-staff in honor of Dickman by order of the state’s governor.

Learn more about Fort McCoy online at <https://home.army.mil/mccoy>, on Facebook by searching “ftmccoy,” and on Twitter by searching “usagmccoy.”

Also try downloading the Digital Garrison app to your smartphone and set “Fort McCoy” or another installation as your preferred base. Fort McCoy is also part of Army’s Installation Management Command where “We Are The Army’s Home.”



Booming training

An Army gun crew braces itself against the terrific concussion of an 8-inch Howitzer during night firing in 1952 at then-Camp McCoy during the height of training on post for Soldiers preparing for the Korean conflict.

From 1950-53, thousands of Soldiers trained at Camp McCoy for deployment to the Korean War.

See Pages 2-3 for more of the historical timeline of Soldiers training for the Korean War at the installation.

U.S. Army Historical Photo

Recalling history at Camp McCoy during Korean War: 1950-53

During the Korean War between 1950-1953, Fort McCoy, which then was Camp McCoy, played a critical role in training and preparing Soldiers for participation in the conflict. For three years the installation returned to a mobilization installation much like it was in World War II.

At that time, the containment area was still less than a decade old and all the training areas were all still more than capable to support training as needed.

Following are dates taken from Camp McCoy historical files establishing a timeline of activities at the post during the Korean War timeframe from 1950-53, specifically Aug. 9, 1950 — Feb. 25, 1953.

1950

— **Aug. 10** — Col. Jacob J. Gerhardt, post commander, announced that the Army would reopen Camp McCoy as a full-time training center for both combat and service soldiers. The camp would be reactivated immediately for training of units smaller than a division. Camp McCoy, the largest of four posts across the country that were reactivated, can accommodate 27,000 troops.

— **Aug. 11** — The 194th Field Artillery Battalion became the first Iowa National Guard unit to be called to active duty, except for domestic peacetime duty, since the close of World War II and the reorganization of the Guard.

— **Aug. 17** — A branch employment office opened in building 2117, the Camp McCoy warehouse area, and accepted applications for “any and all kinds of jobs.” Civilian personnel were employed in the camp hospital, ordnance shops, coal yards and laundry. An estimated 600 additional civilian employees were hired.

— **Sept. 8** — The 887th Field Artillery, a Reserve unit from the Green Bay area, was the first contingent of troops to arrive at newly reactivated Camp McCoy.

— **Sept. 25** — Skeleton organizations for 25 Army units were set up. If filled to strength, 20,000 men would have permanent assignments. It was later reported that 15 additional units would be assigned.

— **Sept. 29** — William Fredericks, a building contractor from Portage, applied to the Tomah City Council for sites upon which to build 20 units of housing for the use of families desiring to live there. The land upon which the housing units were erected was located on the north side of Arthur Street at the interchange of Mill Street. The buildings were one story high and 142 feet long. Four buildings were constructed, each providing five family sized units.

— **Oct. 8** — A trailer city rapidly grew at the old Camp McCoy site, with about 20 trailers in place.

— **Oct. 11** — Camp McCoy’s first selective recruits, assigned to 465th Field Artillery of Minot, North Dakota, arrived.

— **Oct. 17** — The Tomah Chamber of Commerce completed a new directional sign just east of the city on Highways 12/16 with a map and directions showing “the shortest route to Camp McCoy.” The map directs traffic through the city on Highway 12 and onto Highway 21 to the camp.

— **Oct. 27** — The first firing of heavy weapons on the camp artillery range consummated the reactivation of the military establishment. A token 105-mm piece from each of the 187th Field Artillery’s four battalions formed the artillery battery.

— **Oct. 28** — Col. Peter C. Bullard, Camp McCoy Commander, told 27 La Crosse people visiting the camp that the cooperation received from La Crosse and other nearby communities was the finest he had seen in his 40-year Army career.

— **Oct. 30** — The Soldiers at Camp McCoy could call anywhere in the U.S. and overseas from the new telephone center. The center had nine soundproof booths. An attendant took down the information about the call and then gave it to a switchboard operator who got Tomah, which had direct lines to Milwaukee, Madison, and Minneapolis. In addition to the center, 27 unattended pay stations were scattered throughout the camp.

— **Nov. 6** — Maintenance crews have been on the job continuously since the federal government in September stepped up activity. A new chimney went up in the motor repair shop, mess halls were painted, and steps repaired. Thousands of troops were training at the camp.

— **Nov. 9** — The “Real McCoy,” went back into publication at Camp McCoy. The first edition of the rejuvenated camp newspaper/magazine “hit the streets” Friday, Nov. 10. The Real McCoy came into existence July 24, 1942, and continued to serve the camp for more than five years with only one break in publication. The last publication of the paper was May 25, 1947.

— **Nov. 20** — The traffic problem along Highway 21 received attention by the Monroe County



U.S. Army Historical Photos

Soldiers completing deployment training for the Korean War at then-Camp McCoy conduct winter operations in January 1952.

Board. Maj. Kenneth Thomas, McCoy provost marshal, called the situation very dangerous. He said, more automobiles were registered on post than there were people in the city of Sparta. Every day at 4:30 p.m., 2-3,000 vehicles left Camp McCoy for Tomah or Sparta. At 5:30 p.m. another 2,000 left in a procession that continued until 6:30 p.m. At 7 p.m. another 1,000 to 1,500 departed. This process reversed itself in the morning beginning at 7 a.m. when the vehicles returned.

— **Nov. 21** — A fire of undetermined origin swept Service Club No. 2 at Camp McCoy early Sunday morning. The building was a complete loss, with the exception of its kitchen and boiler room.

— **Nov. 26** — It was a great time for paraplegic veterans at Camp McCoy when McCoy officers and men joined with veteran groups of the area to be hosts to the disabled men for a deer hunt. The hunt, believed to be the first of its kind anywhere, was a success, with the men promising “repeats” in the future.

— **Dec. 6** — Unification of the armed forces was never more apparent than when six young Navy doctors were assigned to the station hospital at Camp McCoy recently. Since the Army had a critical shortage of medical personnel and the Navy had 1,400 medical officers in its reserve, former Secretary of Defense Johnson directed the Navy to loan a number of these officers to the Army with the understanding that they would be returned when they could be replaced by Army personnel.

— **Dec. 27** — The old Army refrain of an “aching back” is replaced by a lament of frozen feet as the 306th Logistical Command, of Tulsa, Okla., took to the field at Camp McCoy. Although most of the “Sooner” command personnel were granted Christmas leaves, they spent the day before departure on a snow-covered rifle range with the temperatures hovering below zero.

1951

— **Feb. 11** — Army Chief of Staff Gen. Joseph Lawton Collins made a brief inspection of Camp McCoy along with Lt. Gen. S.J. Chamberlin, Commander of the Fifth Army and Maj. Gen. A.C. Smith, Deputy Commander of the Fifth Army. He told reporters that there were no plans to call National Guard divisions or units in for service in the immediate future. Asked about the adaptability of Wisconsin climate for training, Gen. Collins said it was not suited for basic training and would never be used as such.

— **March 4** — Headquarters, VI Corps Artillery, arrived on post from Fort Sill, Okla., and moved into the headquarters buildings formerly occupied by Headquarters, IX Corps Artillery. The Corps commander, Brig. Gen. Thomas E. Lewis, commented on the favorable condition of the post and said that he was well pleased with the cooperative attitude of McCoy personnel.

— **March 9** — Mrs. Milton L. Spencer, cadet corps director of the Winona Service Volunteers, and 35 Junior Hostesses from Winona, Minn., were the guests of Service Club #2. There was a fried

chicken supper and a dance. A dance band composed of members from the 317th Army Band will furnish music.

— **March 27** — Using their 155-mm “Long Toms,” personnel of the 847th Field Artillery Battalion established a precedent on McCoy’s ranges March 27 when they fired over Highway 21 and both the Milwaukee and Northwestern railroad tracks. Firing continued throughout the day, with interruptions only when guards posted along the railroad tracks radioed the fire direction center to report that trains were approaching. Guards along the highway also stopped motorists and informed them that overhead firing was being conducted.

— **March 30** — The girls Service Club of Milwaukee extended an invitation to all military personnel to attend their parties that were held every other Sunday from 2 p.m.-7:30 p.m. at the KP Hall. The parties featured refreshments, dancing, and hostesses.

— **June 5** — Cannoneers of the 187th Field Artillery group opened up with every artillery piece in their possession during a time-on-target firing mission. This was the first instance of McCoy in 1951 that a group-sized unit has fired a problem. As a phase of the Army Field Forces Training Tests being conducted by the 187th, the Group’s four battalions spent their time tossing shells at a target which was concealed by darkness, even from the artillery observers. Assistant plans and training officer Capt. Frederic Hacker said that this “time-on-target” tactic had been used with deadly effect in Korea.

— **June 9** — The 272nd Field Artillery battalion, a former Massachusetts National Guard unit, which had been training at McCoy since last September, was visited by Maj. Gen. William H. Harrison and Brig. Gen. Timothy J. Regan, assistant adjutant general. To date, the 272nd is the largest organization returned to active military duty from Massachusetts.

— **June 15** — Aided by Company “B” of the 645th Engineer Combat Battalion, the 317th Pontoon Bridge company pushed its 713-foot M-4 Pontoon bridge across the back water of Castle Rock lake between Necedah and Mauston last week. During the exercise, the two companies put up the bridge under the cover of darkness so the VI Corps Artillery could move across the lake. Actual construction of the bridge took about 14 hours. Ten hours after the bridge was completed, the night-working engineers began dismantling it.

— **Aug. 17** — The 34th Infantry (Red Bull) division arrived at McCoy for a two-week summer encampment. It marked the first time the division had trained at this post. Post Commander Brig. Gen. Butler termed the personnel “the Minute Men of this era.”

— **Aug. 21** — Three divisions and several non-divisional units representing several thousand troops cleared the post during the weekend. The 84th Airborne Division left on four troop trains and a portion of them went on charter buses. The 102nd Division left on nine troop trains. In addition to the departures, the first of six trains carrying the 103rd Division arrived on Sunday, along with 46 buses from Minnesota and Iowa. The addition of two divisions for training in one summer greatly increased the volume of responsibilities for the transportation office. A total of 100 civilians and 90 military personnel are employed as drivers.

— **Sept. 12** — A delegation of 14 members from Great Bend and Topeka, Kan., arrived at McCoy for the first of five two-day inspections here by groups of civic leaders and businessmen from the Fifth Army area during September and October. The purpose of the visit was to acquaint the civilians with the complexity of operating a large Army post.

— **Sept. 14** — September marked the first anniversary of the reactivation of Camp McCoy. Coming to McCoy for regular training throughout the first year of reactivation were many non-divisional combat units. In the summer, the camp’s training program stretched to include thousands of men in the Reserve Organized Training Corp, Organized Reserve Corp and National Guard units.

— **Sept. 14** — Nine women joined the Women’s Army Corp detachment at Camp McCoy after completing medical school at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

— **Sept. 14** — Farmers in the rural area around McCoy found chunks and strips of aluminum foil in their fields. Capt. Theodore Davis, plans and training officer of the 235th Forward Observation Battalion, believed the aluminum foil may have been parts of radar training aids, which were suspended from large rubber balloons and released by his unit. The radar targets were three-dimensional affairs with sides that were two feet square. He theorized that they may have been broken apart by the wind during descent and then fallen on the farms.

— **Nov. 9** — Five Korean veterans assigned to the 68th Engineer Combat Group received Bronze Star medals during a formal retreat parade. The medals, presented by Col. T.C. Lighthouse, commanding officer of the 68th, were awarded for meritorious service beyond the call of duty while serving with 2nd Infantry Division in Korea. Receiving the awards were Sgt. Carl F. Stout, Cpl. Richard J. Ksobiech, and Pfc. Kenneth K. Bierschback all of the 115th Engineer Combat Battalion, and Sgt. Jose E. Lugo, and Cpl. Stanley H. Adams with the 31st

Engineer Combat Battalion.

— **Nov. 16** — Master Sgt. Stanley Goodman performed meritorious duty on the battlefields of Korea during the last year. At 29 years of age, he had acquired 16 decorations during his Army career, including the Bronze Star with cluster for heroism in the Korean War; the Distinguished Flying Cross for outstanding action against the enemy; and the Purple Heart. He volunteered in August of 1939. He entered Officers Candidate School in 1947. In 1949, he became commanding officer of Company A, being promoted to first lieutenant in May. In January 1950, by his own request, he reverted back to the rank of Master Sergeant, being assigned as operations sergeant of division headquarters, 3rd Infantry. Master Sgt. Goodman was sent overseas to Korea in August 1950. March 1951 found him attached to a tactical control squadron, where he flew 120 missions as an aircraft observer against enemy opposition, giving infantry troops close-in air support. Goodman returned to the United States on emergency furlough in May with the body of his younger brother, Donald, who was killed in action near Taejon. After his return, Master Sgt. Goodman was assigned to the 5th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion at Camp McCoy.

— **Nov. 22** — The use of military instructors at the Education Center was to be discontinued as soon as civilian replacements could be obtained. The change was necessary because of the non-availability of local funds to pay military teachers. The military instructors at the center had done good work, and the range of offerings at the high school level was at times, somewhat less due to the difficulty in obtaining a variety of civilian instructors in the vicinity of Camp McCoy.

1952

— **Jan. 7** — With the unofficial opening of a new non-commissioned officers club, Camp McCoy’s NCOs were “sitting pretty.” The club’s members were able to entertain guests, as well as themselves, in smart style. Remodeled during November and December at a cost of approximately \$5,000, the club, located at Building 1546 on 11th street, has a large dining room, kitchen, dance hall, bar and snack bar.

— **Jan. 9** — Registrations for setting up rent controls for the Camp McCoy area began Monday, and officials of the Rent Stabilization Authority (RSA) set up quarters in the Sparta Post Office to give information and prepare for the registration. All persons renting rooms, apartments, houses, or trailer space were required to register with the rent control office in Sparta or the field office in Tomah. Rentals were rolled back to Sept. 1, 1950, levels, with new values set for properties not rented at that date.

— **Jan. 16** — Anthony P. Gawronski, state director of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) of Wisconsin, announced the approval of 224 housing units on which the FHA granted the relaxation of credit restrictions for immediate construction in Monroe County. The county was designated as a critical housing area. Of the 174 rental units allowed, 75 were allocated to Sparta and 99 to Tomah. Fifty sale units were granted, of which 26 will be located at Sparta and 24 at Tomah.

— **Jan. 23** — At Camp McCoy’s separation and reassignment center, a highly coordinated program reduced the processing period to a maximum of 48 hours. The center was established at McCoy to expedite the return to civilian life of some of the Army’s 80,000 enlisted reservists. Since its opening day, several thousand Soldiers — coming from Korea, Japan, Okinawa, Europe, Africa, and Alaska, as well as other posts in this country — poured through the center for separation or assignments to new units.

— **Jan. 24** — Even though Camp McCoy was one of the Army’s coldest training sites — valuable for conditioning men to function with their equipment in sub-zero temperatures akin to Korean winters — it was generally not thought of as such. This fact perhaps was overshadowed by Camp McCoy’s huge summer training program. Yet, currently here doing specialized unit training, which periodically requires excursions out to McCoy’s frigid ranges, were a variety of non-divisional combat, technical and service units including field artillery, transportation, chemical, military police, and combat engineers. The winter of 1950-1951 was more rugged than temperatures indicated. There was a shortage of winter clothing in the Army, and most winter clothing in the U.S. was shipped to Korea for our fighting forces there. This year, however, everyone engaged in field training received the latest in Army cold-weather equipment.

— **Jan. 28** — Brig. Gen. Frederic B. Butler, Camp McCoy Commander, received a change of assignment from the Department of the Army, which would again take him to the Far East Command. Butler stated he expected to leave Camp McCoy on Feb. 7, spend a month at his home in San Francisco, and then go to Japan. With an outstanding combat record and known as being an expert in organizing Army training centers, Butler turned Camp McCoy into one of the “top” training centers in the 13-state Fifth Army area.

— **Feb. 8** — A Camp McCoy civilian club opened Saturday at 6 p.m. according to Edward C. Pelshaw, McCoy’s civilian personnel director. The club was located in the former NCO clubhouse, building (See HISTORY, Page 3)



Soldiers demonstrate use of a device attached to 2.5-ton 6x6 truck used for picking up W 110 B wire in open terrain during training at Camp McCoy on March 19, 1951.



Pvt. John Leonard, Orion, Mich., waits by the fence, while Pvt. James Madden, Rochester, Mich., prepares to enter a house in a McCoy training combat village on April 9, 1951.



Recruits with the 272nd Field Artillery Battalion edge their way through an obstacle course on Dec. 6, 1950, emphasizing the infantry phase of training at Camp McCoy.

HISTORY

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1849, on 11th Street. Clubhouse facilities included a comfortable lounge, card room, and a room to be used for meetings or dancing. A small bar was installed, where club members may purchase beer, soft drinks, and sandwiches. The almost 1,500 civilians now employed here and the more than 50 who live on post especially welcomed the facilities of the new clubhouse for recreation during off-duty leisure hours.

— **Feb. 18** — An official investigation was conducted Monday to determine the origin of two fires which were reported at Camp McCoy Sunday and Monday. Loss on one fire was placed tentatively at \$62,000. Fire swept through a two-story dental clinic Sunday, doing extensive damage to the ground floor. The major portion of the \$62,000 loss was represented in dental equipment, according to the post engineer who gave the estimate. The second fire damaged the newly opened civilian club, but no damage estimate was released.

— **Feb. 24** — Previous to fighting in Korea, the combat function of anti-aircraft artillery was confined to defense against air attack. But experience in Korea taught AAA units to use their weapons in support of attacking ground forces in the rugged Korean terrain. The accuracy and rapid fire of the 40-millimeter guns and four-gun mounts of 50-caliber machine guns was very effective in Korea, and the hilly McCoy training areas, coupled with the sub-zero temperatures made the Wisconsin post ideal for such training.

— **March 2** — Twenty-six soldiers watched with interest as Camp McCoy's Commander, Col. Harlan R. Statham, snipped the tape which officially opened the post hospital's "model ward," in an informal ceremony recently. The 26 Soldiers were post-operative patients who had just been moved into their pleasant new quarters. Many of the Soldiers are veterans of combat in Korea — and veterans of other Army hospitals.

Ambulatory patients looked with anticipation at the sun-flooded solarium at the end of the ward, bright with flowered drapes and comfortably furnished with card tables, reading chairs, desks for letter-writing and a combination radio-phonograph. Two private recovery rooms for patients returning from the operating room adjoined the ward.

— **March 30** — Whether the mission in Korea was a patrol action or a major attack, the Army's topographic units paved the way for ground forces by supplying up-to-date battle maps. And many of the men who served with the "topo" units in Korea, and in other zones of operation, were trained by units such as Camp McCoy's 322nd Engineer Topographic Company. At Camp McCoy, the 322nd Engineers produced many maps for use by units training here. Often these maps gave the men their first experience in reading Army maps — a technique which was essential in the performance of combat missions.

— **April 17** — This West-Central Wisconsin Army post was almost completely emptied, having gone all-out to aid flood-stricken Council Bluffs, Iowa, Omaha and Nebraska City, Neb., and help the residents of nearby La Crosse prepare for a flood crest expected early next week. Unit after unit has left the post since Saturday — some by motor convoy and others flying to the Omaha-Council Bluffs disaster area from the La Crosse airport.

Part of the 114th Engineer Combat Battalion was detailed to evacuation work in La Crosse, working with National Guard and volunteer workers to remove furniture and other household items from homes in the flooded areas. With two National Guard "ducks" — amphibious trucks — the men took furniture to the La Crosse Armory and to homes of more-fortunate residents of La Crosse away from the flooded areas. Trucks of the 114th will evacuate homes not yet flooded by the end of the week.

— **May 8** — Brig. Gen. Eugene Harrison assumed command of Camp McCoy for the summer training exercises. He formerly was commandant of the Army general school at Fort Riley, Kansas.

— **May 23** — The influx of Camp McCoy families was definitely reflected in the vital statistics for Monroe County received this week by County Clerk Edwin G. Monick. A total of 343 marriages were performed and births numbered 1,063. Sparta High School was awarded \$10,712 in federal aid for the 1951-52 school year as compensation for the extra burden it is assuming by the influx of Camp McCoy families.

— **May 23** — The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) office at 312 East Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, Wis., began receiving applications May 26, 1952, from builders to construct programmed defense housing in the Camp McCoy critical defense housing area. The program to build 84 housing units in the Camp McCoy area was announced by the FHA. All of the programmed housing was intended for military and civilian personnel of Camp McCoy, the designated defense establishment in the area.

— **May 26** — Advance units of a 31st Infantry Division Task Force were at Camp McCoy preparing for the unit's operation as "school troops" during the 1952 summer training period. The 31st, a National Guard division on active duty, was known as the "Dixie Division," and was originally composed of men from Alabama and Mississippi supplemented by draftees and regular Army personnel from other states.

— **June 19** — Anthony P. Gawronski, director of the Federal Housing Administration of Wisconsin, announced the approval of applications for relaxation of credit restrictions of properties to be constructed in the Camp McCoy critical defense



The riot control squad, all members of the 115th Engineer Construction Battalion, advances on an unruly mob in a wedge formation designed to scatter the group during training Oct. 5, 1951, at Camp McCoy, Wis. The full-dress rehearsal was staged after several hours of instruction on riot control by battalion officers and non-commissioned officers at Camp McCoy.

housing area. Fifty-two were in Tomah and 32 in Sparta. The first construction work on the FHA housing project in Sparta began when excavation started for the footings on two houses on the Roger Hilliker property on the Northeast edge of the city. Hilliker expected that the first units would be ready for occupancy by August. The city began laying sewer to serve the new project and would have all facilities in readiness by the time construction is completed.

— **June 26** — An intense storm containing wind, rain and hail visited Monroe County, disrupting electric power and telephone service and blowing over trees. The main force of the storm struck the Camp McCoy military reservation with winds estimated at 60 to 70 miles an hour. At least 200 trees were damaged, blown down and uprooted by both the high winds and lightning. The heaviest building damage was to the Officer's Open Mess, where a portion of the roof was blown off at the height of the storm.

— **June 30** — More than 1,900 members of the Illinois' 85th Organized Reserve Corps Infantry Division and separate units from eight other Midwestern states were at Camp McCoy Sunday and Monday for their annual two-week summer training. The division's units are from 20 Illinois cities.

— **July 1** — Field training under combat-experienced instructors from Korea faced the Army Organized Reserve units that took part in summer duty at Camp McCoy. Korean veterans who acted as instructors brought the battlefield experience to the members of the reserve units training at Camp McCoy.

— **July 11** — The Camp McCoy Nursery brought 352 "civies" into world in its first year. In addition to three Army nurses working in eight-hour shifts, the department was staffed by six civilian attendants and several members of the Women's Army Corps. The two doctors heading the department gave pre-natal care to young mothers throughout their pregnancy.

— **July 14** — More than 3,000 Organized Reserve Corps troops — the largest group to date this summer — arrived at Camp McCoy for two weeks of summer training. Two-thirds of the arrivals were members of the 70th Infantry Division, a Michigan-Indiana division commanded by Brig. Gen. Clyde E. Dougherty.

— **July 15** — Two of the homes being constructed in the Lemonwier Parkway development were open for public inspection over the weekend. The development, which eventually provided a total of 66 homes, was in the process of construction, with 54 homes to be completed as quickly as possible. The project was authorized by the Federal Housing Administration, which recognized Tomah as a critical defense area in need of housing.

— **July 24** — The windup to another summer training session fast approached for the 15 members of Headquarters and Headquarters detachment, 463rd Quartermaster Battalion, a Sparta reserve unit. The unit was in the late stages of a two-week encampment at Camp McCoy. Commanded by Capt. Raymond W. Brandau of Wilton, the 463rd used one of the camp buildings as its meeting place throughout the year. Once a week, reservists from Sparta, Tomah, La Crosse, Cashton, West Salem and Wilton gathered at McCoy for a two-hour session that kept them posted on the latest Army techniques and developments.

— **Aug. 10** — The 5th Army Chemical Defense School at Camp McCoy marked its first anniversary. More than 1,400 men were trained as chemical defense officers and non-commissioned officers. The only one of its types in the 13-state 5th Army area, the school was established by Department of the Army order on Aug. 6, 1951, to "instruct Army personnel in the detection and course of action in case of biological, chemical, or radiological warfare."

— **Aug. 19** — Key La Crosse and area men

pulled the strings as artillerymen of the 84th Infantry Division started three days of firing with the 105- and 155-mm Howitzer pieces. A highlight of the shoot this week is the "TOT" (time-on-target) at about dawn Friday. At that time, all pieces in the command came to bear on a pinpoint target at the same instant.

— **Sept. 29** — Camp McCoy military police were taken off the town patrols in Sparta and Tomah after many months. The provost marshal's office said it did not have the personnel to staff both Camp McCoy and town patrols. Military policemen were on duty nightly in Sparta and Tomah and remained on duty until after midnight.

— **Sept. 30** — The City of Sparta would have limited USO facilities, but it lost its fight to have a center in operation full-time. The Salvation Army sent a trained worker to Sparta to handle limited USO services in the East lounge room in City Hall. This was the one concession made by top USO and Salvation Army officials following a conference with city officials and the USO Council Monday. The USO center at Sparta was to close but will remain open until the new Salvation Army worker arrives.

— **Oct. 4** — A piercing beam of light capable of penetrating almost 20 miles into the night or illuminating an entire battlefield area showed Camp McCoy Soldiers the combat mission of one of the Army's most unusual units during a night demonstration staged here. The use of the Army's 800-million candlepower searchlight wasn't new to all of the men, however. Many of them had seen "battlefield moonlight" in Korea, where searchlights are proving effective both as tactical and psychological weapons. Two lights of the 988th Engineer Searchlight Company, Fort Bragg, N.C., were used for the demonstration at McCoy.

— **Oct. 27** — Discharges for 100 civilian workers at Camp McCoy were cancelled. The employees were kept on the payroll. Another 80, who were discharged under the civilian employment cutback, have gone into private jobs and will not be replaced, according to Franklin Skogstad, civilian personnel director.

— **Nov. 17** — The communities surrounding Camp McCoy were reported to be "stunned" by Friday's order that would close the camp except for summer reservist training. Tomah leaders had some definite opinions. I.B. (Red) Bell, who headed the three-city committee that formed to have Camp McCoy designated as a permanent year-round training station, felt the matter had far more than local significance.

From a military standpoint, it "just doesn't seem practical," Bell stated. "Officers who have seen Korean duty and have been stationed at other training camps in the United States, have said repeatedly that Camp McCoy offered ideal training conditions for the type of warfare encountered in Korea. The change of season and especially the rugged winters enable men and machines to be conditioned and adapted to the very type of war we are now in."

— **Nov. 19** — The Army no longer needs Camp McCoy because Soldiers are no longer being trained in large groups, residents of this area were told. About 125 residents had met here to protest a recent order in which the camp was closed except for summer training of National Guard units. They were read a letter from Maj. Gen. Miles Reiber, liaison officer between the defense department and Congress. Reiber said that the Army was now being maintained at a maximum strength and the large-scale training program has ended. McCoy is primarily a training camp, not a garrison for trained troops. The general also said that the camp recently had been operating at 40 percent of capacity, making the cost per man too high.

— **Nov. 26** — Lt. Col. Paul Lamb, Camp McCoy provost marshal, revealed that 103 hunters were apprehended here over the weekend. They were informed the reservation was closed for deer hunting, and warned that second offenders may face federal prosecution. The post was declared off limits to deer hunters at the request of the State Conservation Committee in an effort to protect the deer, according to Lamb. Military police patrolled the reservation with instructions to arrest offenders.

— **Dec. 9** — No assurance that the Camp McCoy closing order would be revoked was given representatives of Western Wisconsin communities Monday night, although Department of the Army officials stated they would submit a "favorable" report. The team of military and legislative figures from Washington, D.C., conducted an inspection of Camp McCoy Monday and then reported on their findings to area leaders at a dinner session at the Hotel Sherman in Tomah.

Chief spokesman for the three-man inspection team was T.A. Young, deputy chief of legislative liaison, Department of the Army. When the Korean War broke out, Young said the Army found itself in an unfavorable condition and found it necessary to spend much money to provide training facilities quickly. Camp McCoy was reactivated as part of this program, Young pointed out. McCoy is known as a "mobilization type of camp, able to train an entire division," Young explained. "Today the situation is changed and the Army function is chiefly to replace discharges and casualties and keep the pipeline to Korea filled." He added there is little need for the Camp McCoy type of installation.

— **Dec. 24** — Two hundred Camp McCoy em-

ployees received reduction-in-force notices, which would terminate their employment about Jan. 20. Lt. Charles Mentzer, public information officer at the post, made the announcement. There were about 1,100 civilian workers, and a few of these will be retained for housekeeping staff when the post is closed. About 90 percent of the caretaker staff, Mentzer said, would be maintenance crews.

1953

— **Jan. 5** — "Why are you closing the only cold weather camp you have in the United States?" Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin asked Hon. Robert A. Lovett, Secretary of Defense.

A copy of the letter sent to Sec. Lovett by Sen. McCarthy was received by Gage Baldwin of Sparta. "I would very much like to hear from you as to whether or not you intend to establish another camp like McCoy in some other cold-weather area so that the men can get the benefit of that type of training. If so, where is it to be established and what is the reason for changing?" Senator McCarthy stated that in referring to Camp McCoy as the only cold-weather camp he said he was relying on verbal information from the Department of Defense and assuming that it was correct.

— **Jan. 13** — They're rolling the big guns up on the flatcars, padlocking the barracks and shipping the troops out of Camp McCoy. One of the biggest Army training centers in the country is being put in mothballs after again serving the country in a national emergency. To the surrounding communities — Sparta, Tomah and La Crosse — it was bad news, a low blow in the pocketbook. Since it was reopened in September 1950, shortly after the war in Korea started, the number of troops in the camp has not come close to the 40,000 that were here at one time in World War II. The peak strength reached since the reopening was between 18,000 and 19,000. That was last winter. The number has dwindled to a little more than 1,000 soldiers and an equal number of civilians now. By the end of the month there will only be an estimated 200 military personnel. Only about 200 civilians will be working by late winter. Camp McCoy officials are operating on the assumption that the last military unit will pull out about Jan. 20, leaving only caretaker troops.

— **Jan. 19** — Camp McCoy's replacement and separation center, through whose portals more than 33,000 soldiers have passed in the last 15 months, closed its doors Thursday as the deactivation of this western Wisconsin Army post continued at a rapid pace.

— **Jan. 20** — Activity at the Tomah USO closed Sunday, Jan. 18, when Army personnel from Camp McCoy were served for the final time. William H. Cuthbertson, regional executive of USO, Chicago, supervised the final inventory of equipment and arranged for termination of the lease with the Knights of Pythias Lodge in whose hall the center had operated. Cuthbertson indicated that the parent USO organization would continue to be alert to the needs of servicemen in the Tomah area should Camp McCoy again be activated and would be available for assistance at that time.

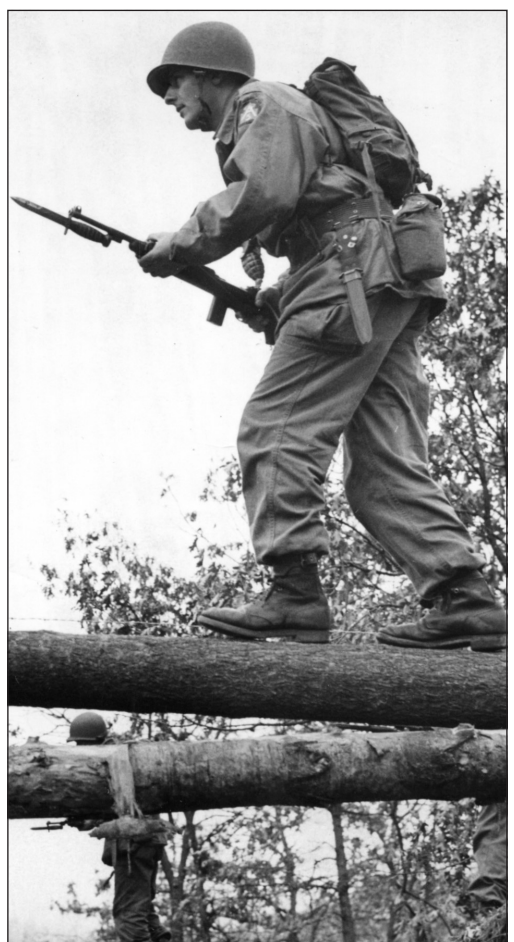
— **Feb. 4** — Employment in the seven-county La Crosse district showed an increase of about 89 percent between November and the end of January, but unemployment had jumped more than 100 per cent, according to the La Crosse office of the Wisconsin State Employment Service. A flurry of winter layoffs in certain industries, return of many seasonal workers from out-of-state government projects and closing of Camp McCoy added to the unemployment rolls.

— **Feb. 17** — Rep. Gardner R. Withrow (R. - La Crosse) said he would introduce in the House a bill to change the name of Camp McCoy to Fort McCoy and to authorize the Defense Secretary to make it a permanent military installation. Withrow said he had checked into a report by Maj. Gen. Gerald J. Higgins, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, who mentioned the possibility of using Camp McCoy for large-scale winter training and Army maneuvers. A Syracuse N.Y., newspaper, in quoting Gen. Higgins also said top military leaders were becoming discouraged about the lack of cold weather there, the paper said, to test ground and airborne troops under simulated Arctic cold.

— **Feb. 21** — At the close of business at Camp McCoy Saturday, Feb. 28, only 126 civilian workers remained in their jobs. An additional 100 may be carried over for final phases of the inactivation program. One hundred military personnel were present for duty, with assignments to other posts being made regularly. The rehiring of about 400 civilian employees for summer training would start about April 1.

— **Feb. 25** — The way was cleared for an end of rent control in the Camp McCoy area of Wisconsin, the area comprising Monroe County. The area was removed by the Defense Areas Advisory Committee from the list of critical areas eligible for rent control. The action followed the recent shutdown of the military base.

(This information was obtained from the records at the Fort McCoy History Center. Official orders on file list Camp McCoy as being activated for the Korean War on Aug. 9, 1950, and deactivated on April 1, 1953. Current and past members of the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office compiled this article.)



A Soldier crosses a ditch on a log bridge during training at Camp McCoy in 1952.



A two-and-a-half-ton truck is ferried across a lake near Camp McCoy, Wis., by members of the 114th Combat Battalion during training at the post on April 18, 1951.

Fort McCoy's Equipment Park features several items from Korean War-era

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

The Korean War started on June 25, 1950, and ended on June 27, 1953, with the signing of an armistice. During most of those years, then-Camp McCoy was also home to training Soldiers for fighting in that war as well, and Soldiers training on post then and those fighting in the war used a unique mix of Army vehicles and equipment.

Some of those vehicle types and equipment can be seen at Equipment Park inside the installation's historic Commemorative Area.

The Equipment Park is an outdoor display of historic and present-day equipment representative of the types used on the installation. The design of the park allows for display of 70 pieces of equipment, ranging from helicopters and howitzers to trucks and trailers. The Commemorative Area also consists of five World War II-era buildings set aside to help tell Fort McCoy's unique story.

These facilities are representative of the types found in the cantonment area when it was constructed in 1942.

The Equipment Park was established in the mid-1990s to complement the Commemorative Area's historical representation, said former Fort McCoy Public Affairs Officer Linda Fournier, who was responsible for the Commemorative Area from 1992 to 2015. What began as an initial outdoor display of five pieces of equipment ("macro-artifacts") increased over time to what is today a display of 70 different items of equipment and vehicles.

"All of the items on display in the Equipment Park specifically were selected in keeping with our Commemorative Area mission statement: to present pieces of military equipment that are representative of what was used here on Fort McCoy," Fournier said in 2015.

Public Affairs Officer Tonya Townsell with the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office who now leads the public interaction with the Commemorative Area and Equipment Park, said the park offers a great spot for picnicking. "The Equipment Park is always open for those who have Fort McCoy access, and there are picnic tables available to use on the outer edges of the park for people to use," Townsell said.

Among the 70 items in Equipment Park is an M3 Personnel Carrier (Half-Track). This carrier was available during the Korean War. According to Army facts about the M3, it was first manufactured in 1941 by White Motor Co., and later produced by Autocar Co., and Diamond T Motor Co. The M3 was used to transport cargo and personnel in combat zones.

"It used the same chassis and mechanical components as the M2 half-track car, but the rear-armored body was 10 inches longer and featured a door in the rear to ease entry and exit from the vehicle," the Fort McCoy Equipment Park Guidebook states.

It had a crew of three, could carry six passengers, and its top speed was 45 miles per hour (mph).

According to numerous online sources as well, the M3's use in the Korean War was extensive, but after the war it was no longer considered as effective as more heavily armored vehicles like tanks and armored personnel carriers.

Another item from the Korean War-era at Equipment Park is the famous "Sherman" tank, or M4A3 Combat Tank.

The Fort McCoy Equipment Park Guidebook states the version in the park was first built in 1942 by Ford Motor Co.

"The M4A3 provided firepower, mobility, and crew protection for offensive combat," the guidebook states. "It was the principal U.S. combat tank in all combat zones for most of World War II."

Versions of the Sherman were also used during the Korean War along with newer armored tanks such as the M46 Patton. The Sherman has a crew of five — a commander, gunner, loader, driver, and assistant driver — and can go a top speed of 25 mph. Its main armament is a 76 mm main gun and .30- and .50-caliber machine guns.

For tracked vehicles from the Korean War-era, Equipment Park also has the M42A1 Anti-Aircraft Artillery Gun, Self-Propelled. According to the Fort McCoy Equipment Park Guidebook, this item was manufactured by Cadillac in 1951.

"The M42A1 deployed with armored divisions as a means of providing mobile anti-aircraft weapons," the guidebook states. "Because of its rapid rate of fire, it also proved valuable as an infantry support weapon against ground targets."

The M42A1 requires a crew of six — commander, gunner, sight-setter, two loaders, and a driver — and has an armament of two 40 mm guns.

And speaking of armament, the park also has the M114A2, 155 mm Howitzer from the Korean War-era. The guidebook states its "a towed weapon first produced in 1942 as medium artillery."

"The M114A2 was used during World War II, and in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," the guidebook states. The Howitzer required a crew of 11, had a range of 14 miles, and could have a sustained rate of fire of 40 rounds per hour.

In terms of troops transport, Equipment Park also displays a Korean War-era truck — the M37 Cargo Truck. It's a 3/4-ton truck, and the initial version of this truck was developed in 1941 to replace the Army half-ton truck, the guidebook states.

"It was first manufactured in 1945 by the American Car and Foundry Co., and Cadillac Motor Car Division of the General Motors Co.," the guidebook states. "It was used as a cargo and personnel carrier. The vehicle could be rigged on a platform for dropping in airborne operations."

The vehicle would require a crew of three in the cab and six to eight people could be seated in box.

Its top speed was 35 mph. Forging depth without special equipment was 42 inches.

"The area will be closed up for winter around mid-November," Townsell said. People can still walk into the park from outside the driving area after November.

For more information, contact the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office.

Learn more about the Army's history in the Korean War by visiting the U.S. Army Center for Military History at <https://history.army.mil>.

Learn more about Fort McCoy online at <https://home.army.mil/mccoy>, on Facebook by searching "ftmccoy," and on Twitter by searching "usagmccoy."



Photos by Claudia Neve

An M4A3 "Sherman" Combat Tank is shown Oct. 17 at Equipment Park at the Commemorative Area. The Sherman was the principal U.S. combat tank in all combat zones for most of World War II and was also used in the Korean War.



An M3 Personnel Carrier (Half-Track) is shown Oct. 31 at Equipment Park at Fort McCoy. This carrier was available during the Korean War. According to Army facts about the M3, it was first manufactured in 1941 by White Motor Co., and later produced by Autocar Co., and Diamond T Motor Co. The M3 was used to transport cargo and personnel in combat zones.



A 155mm Howitzer is shown at Equipment Park at Fort McCoy on Sept. 29. The M114A2 was used during World War II, and in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The Howitzer required a crew of 11, had a range of 14 miles, and could have a sustained rate of fire of 40 rounds per hour.

Sharing a special day with a Korean War Soldier who finally made it home

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

I never personally met Pfc. Charles Dickman, but I'll definitely remember him, and I'll never forget that I got to see him come home.

The young private died 73 years ago on July 12, 1950, in an area near Chochiwon, South Korea, as he fought with the U.S. Army's 21st Infantry Regiment in the Korean War. He died before he even reached his 18th birthday.

For seven-plus decades, Private Dickman was missing in action. But in recent months, he was found, identified, and returned to be buried with honors. And on Oct. 21, he was brought home to his hometown of Cashton, Wis., and laid to rest, with honors.

The day before I planned on going to this event, I had only learned about it from the fact that a team of Soldiers from Fort McCoy were going to be on hand to honor the family at the services. Then I thought for sure I needed to go.

Private Dickman's funeral mass was set for 11 a.m. at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, which is right in the heart of Cashton. Now, I have been to Cashton dozens of times before, just not the church. I've been through there going other places, stopped at the grocery store a bunch of times, got gas there, been to a bunch of garage sales over the years, and met a few people named Mlsna as well.

Cashton is a great town, really. I've also gone to the dentist there, hit up the cheese store plenty of times, and I like its charm because it's nestled at the top of the hill country in Western Wisconsin. I imagine it was a great place to grow up for Charles Dickman, even back in the 1930s and 1940s.

On the day of funeral, my wife Bobbi and I arrived about 10 minutes early for the mass. I had never been to a funeral mass, so this was going to be something new.

As we went in, we had to wait a bit. I stood next to two TV reporters



Father Michael Klos with Sacred Heart Catholic Church gives a special sermon about Pfc. Charles Dickman on Oct. 21, 2023, in Cashton, Wis., at the church.

who were waiting to get in and set up their cameras in the back. Since I was doing similar work, I stayed in the back as well.

The church itself was well lit and what you'd expect to see in a small-town Catholic church. There are the beautiful stained-glass windows, rows of beautifully made wooden pews to the left and right, and high cathedral ceilings for the sound to echo throughout when the music and prayers are played and recited.

Outside the church before we came in, you couldn't miss what was going on. There were numerous U.S. flags surrounding the church. There of course was the hearse for Private Dickman's final cruise through his hometown to honor him, and there were also lots of cars and Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

Back inside, I was standing at the back, my wife was sharing the last pew with some other guests, and to my right I saw a whole pew of veterans wearing jackets with Dickman's name on it.

Then it dawned on me that the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post in Cashton, VFW Post 8584, is the Dickman-Spaeth Post. It's named in part after Private Dickman, and now these veterans for the first time can honor one of the Soldiers for whom they named their post after. That alone is a special day.

For the next hour, I stood there listening to the priest talk about Charles,

his family, and the hope his family had that one day he would return home. The priest also spoke of really how glorious it was that even though most of Charles' immediate family members have passed away, their prayers were answered in that he was found and is now home.

Listening in and being there in person, at least, was Charles' sister Patricia Filut. There also were many nieces and nephews and extended family members present for the honors that were presented to Charles upon his return to Cashton. Even though the weather was chilly, windy, and cloudy outside, there was nothing but warmth and love for him inside that church.

And for me, normally at events like this I feel a great sadness, but for some reason I think I was like many there who were happy this could finally happen for the family after such a long time. And now that the mass was complete, it was time to proceed to Sacred Heart Cemetery.

The church's cemetery is just under a mile down the county highway from the church. They had already set up the area for military and funeral honors. As the procession made its way led by Harleys with flags and a trail of dozens of vehicles, then everyone parking and walking, it was a sight to see.

At graveside, that's where the Fort McCoy Soldiers were waiting in forma-

tion at attention, where veterans were in place, also at attention, and all around were family, friends, and spectators there to witness the honors about to take place.

The team of Soldiers from Fort McCoy included Maj. Randy Downs, company commander of U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy Headquarters and Headquarters Company; Maj. Michael Ball, Deputy Staff Judge Advocate for Fort McCoy; 1st Sgt. Jacob Pattison, first sergeant for U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy Headquarters and Headquarters Company; and Sgt. 1st Class Jason Henderson and Staff Sgt. Nathan Miller, also both with U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy Headquarters and Headquarters Company. Their duty was to fold the flag from the casket and present it to the family, specifically to Charles' sister Patricia.

They first brought Charles out of the hearse and brought his flag-covered casket to its stand. The priest then said his part to honor Charles once again.

From there I watched. I watched the family members look frozen. It seems when this part comes, it's where the reality hits of the ultimate sacrifice that was made.

I watched next where the veteran honor guard began the three-volley salute. I watched, with each volley, a few family members move in response. To me, when the "bang" rings out from those guns, you hear the sound of honor. Maybe that's what they heard too.



Maj. Randy Downs, company commander of U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy Headquarters and Headquarters Company, salutes Pfc. Charles Dickman during the graveside service Oct. 21 for Dickman in Cashton, Wis., at Sacred Heart Cemetery.

Next the honor guard of Soldiers moved in and began the rhythmic folding of the American flag — slowly, methodically, and flawlessly. It was special to see because these are Soldiers who I work with every day, and they did this with the precision of professionals.

Once folded, Major Downs presented the flag to Patricia. That's the moment I felt a tear roll down my cheek. That's the hardest part. That's a moment I'd last seen at Arlington National Cemetery in 2008 when I witnessed a funeral of an Airmen who finally made it back from Vietnam. It's the moment of honor to a family whose hero gave the ultimate sacrifice.

I think after that, those who were next to me felt the same, and shortly thereafter, we all quietly and respectfully walked back to our vehicles. I think you could have heard a pin drop in the grass even with the wind blowing. It was that moving.

So now, as we look toward Veterans Day and think of the sacrifices veterans make, Pfc. Charles Dickman gave the ultimate sacrifice in service to his country. I think there's no greater hero and no greater sacrifice.

It was a great honor to witness his coming home, and every time I visit Cashton, he'll get a special salute from this veteran. Welcome home Charles. Welcome home.