

Solano Veterans Scene – June 2014

Ensuring veterans' remains get proper resting place

Retired Air Force Master Sergeant Michael McKay is now on board as Solano County's volunteer veterans remains coordinator, and he needs your help in ensuring the cremated remains of our veterans are probably interred.

His task is to help people who have or come across an urn with the cremated remains of veteran to find a proper resting place for that veteran. Solano County is fortunate to have the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery in Dixon where these veterans can be given a final resting place in a beautiful and respectful environment.

While it may seem strange to think that someone may not already be in their final resting place, it happens more often than you might think. It could be as simple as when the spouse of a veteran dies and the veteran preceded him or her in death. The spouse had a special place for the urn, but that place no longer exists. Unfortunately, these remains may have been left in the care of family members or friends and forgotten, or left unclaimed at a mortuary or crematorium for many years.

Regardless of the reason, Mike will work to ensure these unclaimed cremated remains of veterans are properly interred. Please give him a call at 784-6950 if you have or know of any cremated remains that need Mike's attention. The Veterans Administration will cover the burial cost if the remains are determined to be those of an eligible veteran or the dependent of a veteran.

This volunteer position came about as a result of a change in the military and veterans section of the California code that established procedures whereby all unclaimed remains of veterans and veterans' dependents could be identified and designated to a veterans' remains organization for proper burial at a national cemetery.

The code encouraged county board of supervisors to designate an honorably discharged veteran of the United States military or a member of a veterans' remains organization to serve in this important volunteer role. The Solano County Board of Supervisors chose to designate an honorably discharged veteran to fulfill these duties as part of the County Veterans Service Office.

As part of this office, Mike will assist in developing public service announcements, answer calls from the public, and contact local mortuaries, crematoriums and other facilities to locate unclaimed remains of veterans. Mike will work with a variety of agencies (the Social Security Administration, Department of Vital Statistics, Department of Veterans Affairs and other applicable entities) to determine if the remains belong to a veteran or the dependent of a veteran.

This task will be executed through the combined, cooperative efforts of the American Legion, other volunteer service and veteran organizations, local funeral homes, State funeral commissions, state and national Veterans Administration agencies, and the National Veterans Cemetery Administration.

Mike will also work with the Missing in America Project, which is a registered non-profit veterans' remains organization and is a branch of the American Legion, to verify and inter the cremated remains. Once interred, with their names posted on the national cemetery list, these veterans will have a final resting place that honors their service to the country.

Ted Puntillo is director of Veteran Services for Solano County. Reach him at 784-6590 or TEPuntillo@SolanoCounty.com. The Solano County Veteran Services Office, 675 Texas St. in Fairfield, is open from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.