



Hero's homecoming

Pearl Harbor veteran laid to rest after DNA identification

By [Brian Knox](#) / Published on December 09, 2020

Sometimes the journey home takes a little longer than expected. For Greenwood native **Lawrence E. Woods** — one of our country's first casualties in World War II — the trip took nearly eight decades.

FINAL STEPS — A Navy honor guard carries a casket bearing the remains of Lawrence Woods to the family burial plot at Greenwood Cemetery Saturday morning. Woods died in the attack at Pearl Harbor 79 years ago, but his remains were not identified until last year using anthropological and mitochondrial DNA analysis.

That journey came to an end Saturday when the remains of Navy Fireman First Class Woods were laid to rest at Greenwood Cemetery almost 79 years to the day after the 28-year-old was killed in the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor. "I wish my grandmother and grandfather were there to see it," said Woods' nephew, Lawrence Jameson. "He was first declared missing and later declared dead. They never knew what happened to him, so when we got the choice, we decided it would be best to go ahead and bring him back to Texas."

Jameson's mother, Ina Bea (Woods) Jameson, was Woods' younger sister — 16 at the time of her brother's death. Lawrence Jameson is named after his uncle.

As the oldest closest living relatives, Jameson and his brother both submitted cheek swabs, and through mitochondrial DNA analysis, Woods' remains were positively identified last year.

Woods and his younger brother, Winfred, were both aboard the USS Oklahoma the morning of Dec. 7, 1941. Both brothers were among the total 2,403 people killed.

Winfred's body was identified and buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

Lawrence Woods was officially listed as missing for a time and later his status was amended to show he died as a result of the attack.

Like many of the 429 crewmen killed aboard the Oklahoma, his body could not be identified, so he was buried in a mass grave at the same cemetery where Winfred is buried.

Jameson said his mother originally provided a DNA sample when efforts to identify the unknown soldiers began more than 15 years ago. But she died in 2009 before her brother could be positively identified.

Wood's journey home began five years ago when his remains, along with others who perished aboard the Oklahoma, were disinterred and taken to a forensic laboratory in Nebraska for possible identification through the Defense Department POW/MIA Accounting Agency. It is there that the bones were respectfully laid out into incomplete skeletons as the search to match the remains to names began.

Jameson said he has visited the facility, located at the Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha.

"We toured the facility up there a few years ago and saw the tables where the bones were laid out," he said. "They are doing remarkable work all over the world."

According to a news release from the Defense Department POW/MIA Accounting Agency, the USS Oklahoma Project passed a major milestone earlier this year when it completed the mitochondrial DNA sequencing of the more than 5,000 DNA samples given to the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System's DNA lab.

"This is huge for us because it allows us to complete our analyses of all of the USS Oklahoma remains, and therefore, identify as many service members as possible," said Carrie LeGarde, the USS Oklahoma Project lead. "The Armed Forces Medical Examiner System's DNA testing has been a really critical part, and so the family reference samples have been the other half of that critical component because we need to be able to match the DNA to something. We've had pretty good success with getting family reference samples."

For the family of Lawrence Woods, success was achieved in August of 2019 when his remains were positively identified. Jameson said the following month, Naval officers came to his home for the official notification. The officers provided him with information about how the identification was made and even showed him photos of the partial skeleton they were able to put together.

"We were amazed," Jameson said.

A funeral was originally scheduled for April, but when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, plans had to change. The service was rescheduled for last Saturday.

"We tried to get as close to Dec. 7 as we could," Jameson said.

Last Thursday night, Jameson traveled to DFW Airport as the remains of his uncle returned to Texas once again. As family and friends gathered at the country cemetery Saturday, the U.S. flag-draped coffin of F1c Woods was carried from a hearse to the family burial plot by a Naval honor guard. The service began with a 21-gun salute and the playing of Taps.

Those gathered remained silent as the flag was carefully folded and then given to Jameson. The only sound was the occasional mooing of cows in a nearby pasture.

A chaplain described the valiant actions Woods and others aboard his ship performed that day.

Of the 429 men who perished on the USS Oklahoma, 263 have been identified as of October of this year through the project.

Woods' parents never got to see their son come home from the war, but now he rests just a few feet away from them.

Like many of those lost aboard the USS Oklahoma on Dec. 7, 1941, the journey home has been long.

That journey may have reached its end, but the sacrifice will never be forgotten.