

POW / MIA PROFILES

The purpose of the State POW/MIA Committee is to “provide increased awareness of POW / MIAs, to organize the Department and Posts’ POW / MIA activities and to provide education to the public”. To realize this duty, a profile of a WI resident who is or has been classified as POW / MIA will be presented each month for your reflection. It is with great respect that we present this month’s Profile.

There is a grave site in the Oak Grove Cemetery in La Crosse. The stone on the grave reads, “In Memory of Earl L. Dansberry, SGT. U.S. Army; Korea; January 31, 1929 – July 20, 1951.” Only memories are there, the flesh and bones lie somewhere on the Korean Peninsula.

On Hill 710, near a town called Kumgol-gol, 8 miles below the 38th parallel, SGT Dansberry and five other Rangers were captured by the Chinese Communist Forces on May 20th, 1951.

Earl was born in LaCrosse, WI on January 31, 1929. He lost his father to Spinal Meningitis when he was five years old. His mother re-married when Earl was eight and he soon lived with five other siblings. Earl attended public schools in LaCrosse until he was seventeen. In 1946, he dropped out of school to join the U.S. Army and was subsequently sent to Guam. He received a medical discharge 16 months later after having kidney surgery. After his discharge, he returned to LaCrosse and finished High School at Aquinas, graduating in JUNE 1949

In August 1949, Earl re-enlisted in the Army and was sent to Fort Benning, GA. Upon completion of parachute and glider training, he was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. In October of 1950, he was selected for Airborne Ranger training and was sent back to Fort Benning. In late November he completed training and was then assigned to the 1st Airborne Ranger Company.

The 1st Airborne Ranger Company arrived in Korea on the 17th of December, 1950. Letters sent to his family and friends were few, usually with little to say about his condition. Always that he was okay and taking care of himself.

Earl's mother received a telegram on March 1st, 1951. This telegram was followed within a few days with a letter from Earl who was in a military hospital in Japan. The letter reassured his mother that he was okay and had only minor shrapnel

scratches but would be able to wear the Purple Heart. After receiving this letter, she never heard directly from Earl again.

The family knows that Earl was returned to duty on April 11, 1951. A missing-in-action telegram was received on June 12, 1951. The Department of the Army reported that SGT Earl L. Dansberry, during the month of June, was being marched North by the Chinese Communists along with other POW's when the column was strafed by planes at which time Earl was seriously wounded in the leg. He was subsequently taken to a hospital where he died of malnutrition and wounds.

The POW/ MIA Committee wishes to thank Mr. Robert Hass, Black Earth WI, for letting us reproduce this story. Robert is a member of Mickelson-Martin Post 313, Black Earth and he is SGT Danberry's half-brother.