

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
QMDS-DC-000.7

AUBURN GENERAL DEPOT  
U. S. ARMY  
AUBURN, WASHINGTON

18 Sept 47

Mr. Click Relander  
Republic-Managing Editor  
Yakima, Washington

32172

Dear Mr. Relander:

We appreciate the information contained in your letter, dated 16 Sept 47, and are glad of the opportunity to answer your questions and provide you with additional information concerning the final interment mission of World War II deceased.

Your supposition that the rumor prevalent in Yakima is merely a rumor is correct. We cannot speak of "the first body to be brought back from overseas," since the ship landing in San Francisco, on or about 15 October, and in New York, on or about 30 October, will return approximately 3,000 servicemen. Those who died at Pearl Harbor and in the Battle of the Bulge, incidentally, will be returned first.

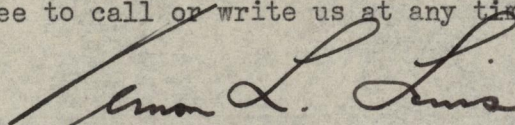
The War Department has not authorized Distribution Divisions to release at this time the names of the deceased servicemen, together with the names and addresses of their next of kin, principally because they believe that there should not be any unnecessary intrusions on their privacy. The War Department may release to the press at San Francisco and New York, however, the names and addresses of deceased servicemen, together with those of their next of kin, 24 hours after the deceased have been sent to the Distribution Division from the two ports of debarkation. Your newspapers possibly may obtain this information through Associated Press and United Press dispatches emanating at San Francisco and New York.

Distribution Divisions will not know the exact number of returning servicemen on any ship until they receive from the ports of embarkation overseas (through the Quartermaster General's office) a passenger list of the deceased. We can reasonably say, however, that there will be some returning to the Yakima Valley in October and November, but we do not know the exact number, nor the names and addresses at this time.

The final interment mission is the greatest peace time mission the War Department has been called upon to fulfill. It is our purpose to assist the next of kin in every possible way, and to carry out their wishes, above all else, in a dignified and reverent manner. It is also our desire to acquaint the public --- through correspondence and the media of press and radio --- with the nature and purpose of this mission so that their knowledge of it may be both accurate and informative. In this light, rest assured that we will notify you should there be any change in the War Department's policy of not permitting American Graves Registration Divisions to provide newspapers with the names and addresses of deceased servicemen being returned.



We would like to express our appreciation to you for the splendid co-operation we have received during the past year. If we can be of any further assistance to you, please feel free to call or write us at any time.

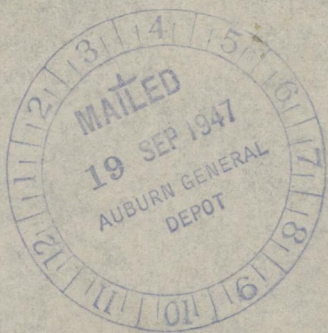
A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Vernon L. Lewis", written in a cursive style.

VERNON L. LEWIS

Lt. Colonel, QMC

Chief, American Graves Registration Division





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