

KOREAN WAR PROJECT REMEMBRANCE



MAJ JACK DAVID GRIFFITHS
Class 22-42

Silver Star

38th Field Artillery Battalion (105MM)
Battalion Headquarters

2nd Infantry Division

Hostile, Died While Captured (POW)

Date of Loss: November 30, 1950

MAJ - O4

Service Number: O-0036376

San Diego, California

Born: August 14, 1919

Burial: San Diego, California (January 11, 2017)

Major Griffiths was a veteran of World War II. In Korea, he was S-2 of the 38th Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division. He was taken Prisoner of War while fighting the enemy near Kunu-ri, North Korea on November 30, 1950. He died while in captivity on August 31, 1951. His remains were recovered but not identified in 1956 and temporarily interred in Hawaii in November 2013. His remains were finally identified on October 25, 2016.

From the July 26, 2009, Barbara Christiansen - Daily Herald, American Fork (Utah) Citizen

Bob Griffiths hasn't seen his older brother since he died as a POW in the Korean War. This week he will have peace at last. After nearly 60 years, there will be a memorial service for Major Jack David Griffiths. It will be at the Camp Williams cemetery on July 30 at 10 a.m. The public is invited to attend. "You just don't know what this means to me," Bob Griffiths said. "My brother is finally coming home."

It will not be in the literal sense -- he was buried in Korea -- but there will be a marker at the cemetery. The services will include a life sketch and eulogy, plus a flag unfolding and refolding ceremony. After that, the flag will be presented to Bob Griffiths, who will place it in one of two display cases he has that hold Jack's medals. He will have those at his American Fork home.

One of the foremost honors Jack Griffiths received was the Silver Star. Drake Markle, adjutant of the American Legion Post 49, which has put together the memorial service for Griffiths, put it in perspective. "It is the third highest honor given," he said. Griffiths received the Silver Star for "gallantry in action" during World War II in August of 1943 in Sicily.

"First Lieutenant Griffiths, with complete disregard for his personal safety, alternately ran and crawled across 1,000 yards of completely exposed terrain to the aid of an enlisted man at the battery observation post which was under heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire," the commendation states. "With mortars and artillery shells landing as near as 25 yards from his person, First Lieutenant Griffiths made his way to the battery observation post, assisted the enlisted man to an alternate OP position from which First Lieutenant Griffiths conducted an adjustment on and silenced the enemy battery which had been shelling the observation post."

Bob Griffiths has fond memories of his brother. "I liked his attitude and how he cared for me," he said. "As tough as it was to take me along, he took me." Bob was six years younger than Jack. "He had such a wonderful attitude about life and people. He loved his family. "He said Jack was always full of life. "I remember one time my mother, who was very fastidious, put up the Christmas tree," he said. "Every bit of tinsel had to be just so. Then Jack opened the screen door and ran right through the Christmas tree."

Despite his energy level, people loved Jack, said Bob Griffiths. "He was a very lovable person," he said. "Everybody loved Jack." He said Jack was an athlete in high school and earned multiple letters in four sports.

Jack Griffiths left behind a wife and a son. Another son, Jack Jr., died of crib death at three months old, at about the same time Jack died. There is uncertainty about the exact date of his death. He was part of the 2nd Infantry Division, which lost 5,000 men in fighting in Korea at the end of November 1950. It was during that series of battles that he was taken prisoner.

He and other POWs were marched approximately 50 miles to a camp near the border of Korea and China. At some point during the next spring or summer, he became ill and died. He was buried in the camp cemetery. After they returned to the United States, 11 of his comrades reported his death, and four said they had direct knowledge of it. They estimated he died between April and July of 1951, but his death date was eventually made official as Aug. 31.

Bob Griffiths said he had asked for help to have his brother memorialized, but to no avail, until now. "We had been working on this for five years," he said. "All we wanted was a flag for my brother." That changed when he contacted Post 49 of the American Legion.

"Drake and I went to see what Robert had, and we were intrigued," said post commander Kent Blanco. "It was profound beyond belief. We contacted Camp Williams and discussed having a memorial service. Jack never came home with honors." Bob Griffiths said he was pleased with the effort. "Now he will actually have a plaque at Camp Williams," he said. "We will come to closure. Up until now he has just been a name."