



Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs

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"Permanent Reminder of Those Whose Memory We Honor"

KDVA Commissioner Lucas Gives Keynote at Flag-Raising

(FRANKFORT, April 15, 2009) – Just two days after a Kentucky soldier missing in action for 58 years was finally laid to rest, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet raised POW/MIA flags at all 24 highway rest areas and welcome centers across the state. At the Welcome Center on I-64 in Shelby County, KDVA Commissioner Ken Lucas noted the timeliness of recognizing Prisoners of War and service members Missing in Action.

“We in Kentucky are fortunate to have been reminded just two days ago that the question of Prisoners of War and Missing in Action is not a historical or theoretical one,” Lucas said to a crowd of more than 100 veterans and others.

“On Monday, April 13, Kentucky welcomed home a Breathitt County boy who was killed in Korea 58 years ago and whose remains were just identified. He joined the Army in '48 at 16, lying about his age. His parents died in '99, a year before his remains were found, and his three much-younger brothers did not remember him well. They remembered the picture of him his parents kept in the living room, though. And at the service they accepted folded flags from the Fort Knox Commander performing their brother's burial honors.

“Lloyd Dale Stidham of Breathitt County was buried at Camp Nelson National Cemetery, his casket delivered by a horse-drawn caisson. It rained all morning, with severe thunderstorms

predicted for the time of the 2:30 service. Skies cleared around 2, and storms didn't return until 5, when Corporal Stidham was safely laid to rest.

“More than fourteen hundred Kentuckians are still missing in action: Twelve hundred and fifty in World War II, 203 – now 202 – in the Korean War, and 14 in Vietnam.

“We saw in Nicholasville on Monday that even after six decades, families do not forget, families still need closure, families cherish the service of full military honors for their missing loved ones.

“The Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs is pleased and gratified to see these POW/MIA flags flying on Kentucky’s highways as a permanent reminder of those whose memory we honor and whom we hope to welcome home soon.”

“We are proud to fly these flags as solemn reminders of the great sacrifice so many have made to defend the United States of America,” said Transportation Secretary Joe Prather, who also spoke at the Shelby County welcome center and had accepted the 24 flags donated by Veterans Service Organizations and authorized them to be raised at the rest areas. “Let us never forget the price so many have paid in service to all of us.”

“Prisoners of war are casualties that can all too often be easy to forget,” said Stephen Stewart, commander of American Legion Hardin Post 113. “The image of crosses lined in neat rows at Arlington and other national cemeteries reminds us of the high cost of freedom. In any gathering of veterans, the scars of war wounds and missing limbs remind us of the sacrifices of those who have fought for freedom.”

KDVA works with the U.S. Department of Defense to find family members of Kentuckians missing in the Korean War in an effort to obtain DNA samples that will be very helpful in identifying remains as they are found and returned to the US. For more information, go to <http://veterans.ky.gov/programs/koreandna.htm>.