Private First Class David L. Knight

RESEARCHED BY ERICA SWENSON

Hometown: Augusta, Maine
Entered Service: January 3, 1951
Unit: 729th Transportation Operations Battalion, Transportation Corps
       117th Transport Company Reserve
Rank: Private First Class, U.S. Army
Cemetery: Section V, Site 5291
          Togus National Cemetery
          Chelsea, Maine

February 1, 1930 - December 13, 1959
Before the War

On February 1, 1930, David Lee Knight was born in China, Maine. He was the only son of Norman and Marjorie Knight who divorced when their son was ten. He lived with his mother in a small apartment in Augusta during his teenage years. He attended Cony High School where he was a member of both the football team and the glee club. In school, he had the reputation of being someone who could get off task. As the 1947 high school yearbook pointed out, “We might well call Dave the vagabond of our class because his mind is always wandering.”

Knight had ambitions of one day following in his own father’s footsteps and becoming an officer in the maritime service.
Military Experience

On January 3, 1951, Knight entered the military. He was assigned to be part of the 729th Transportation Operations Battalion. It was the job of this group and other transportation operation battalions to follow and supply advancing troops. Over the course of the three-year war, the Transportation Corps moved over three million soldiers and seven million tons of cargo throughout the Korean peninsula. When Knight joined the battalion, the situation in Korea was more static, but his job was not an easy one.

The transportation operation battalions faced many obstacles: derailments, poor track conditions due to extreme weather, track and bridge washouts, landslides, guerrilla attacks, water pump failures, and communication breakdowns. Furthermore, moving ammunition could be dangerous. In March 1951, there were eight train accidents in one month.

Despite the risk, Knight transferred to the 117th Transportation Battalion on December 15, 1952. He continued to serve in this capacity until the August 10, 1956, three years beyond the Korean conflict.

Left: Railroad Map of Southern Korea, 1950. National Archives and Records Administration (RG 338, Box 5923, Entry 37042).

Right: The General Pershing, a military train used to transport soldiers and supplies throughout the Korean Peninsula, July 18, 1951. National Archives and Records Administration (111-SC-374358).

Veteran Experience

In 1956, the U.S. military honorably discharged Knight. He returned to Maine where he lived in Augusta, until his mysterious death in the Augusta Veterans Affairs Medical Center three years later in 1959. He was recommended for burial at Togus National Cemetery by a staff member of the VA hospital. His obituary stated that he had no living relatives, although his mother lived only a few miles away in China, Maine.

Commemoration

On Sunday, December 20, 1959, the Togus VA Chapel held a service in honor of David Lee Knight. Afterward, he was laid to rest at the Togus National Cemetery in Chelsea, Maine, where he is one of two veterans who served in the Korean War.
## Bibliography

**712th Transportation Battalion, Command Reports December 1950-March 1951; Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter), Record Group 338 (Box 5923); National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.**


Organizational History Files, 459th Signal Bn. To 724th Transportation Bn.; Records of HW, U.S. Army Pacific, Military Historian's Office, Record Group 550 (Box 302); National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.


**Railroad Map of Southern Korea; 712th Transportation Battalion, Cmd Report 1950. RG 338 (Box 5923); National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.**
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