Honoring the Fallen at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery

Guiding Question:
How do national cemeteries memorialize those killed in war as well as veterans?
Overview
Students will explore (virtually or in person) a variety of types of burials and memorials and analyze how cemeteries honor service members buried under varying circumstances.

Objectives
At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

• Describe how U.S. national cemeteries honor those killed in action whose remains are not easily identified; and

• Analyze how the U.S. government works to identify and memorialize those lost in combat, even many years later.

Spotlight: Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery
Jefferson Barracks, one of the National Cemetery Administration’s oldest interment sites, has served as a burial place for soldiers from all wars. The original military post was built south of St. Louis, Mo., on the banks of the Mississippi River to replace Fort Bellefontaine. Selected for its strategic geographic location, the post was opened in 1826. Jefferson Barracks became the army’s first permanent base west of the Mississippi River.

The old cemetery contains approximately 20,000 gravesites, including more than 1,000 Confederate dead. During this era, Union dead were interred in sections by state.

World War II casualties introduced a new focus to the cemetery as the central repository for group interments resulting from national disasters, when individual remains cannot be identified. Among the more than 560 group burials—meaning two or more veterans in a common grave—are 123 victims of a 1944 Japanese massacre of POWs in the Philippines, and the remains of 41 unidentified marines who perished in a South Vietnam helicopter crash in 1968.
Standards Connections

Connections to Common Core

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Documents Used

**Primary Sources**

Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 463 Command Chronology for February 1968 (excerpt)
Vietnam Center, Archive, & Museum of the Vietnam War, Texas Tech University

Marine Observation Squadron 2, Marine Aircraft Group 16 Command Chronology, January 31, 1968 (excerpt)
Vietnam Center, Archive, & Museum of the Vietnam War, Texas Tech University

Missing Air Crew Report #42-32291
National Archives and Records Administration

**Secondary Sources**

“Bruce A. Van Voorhis, LCDR, USN”
U.S. Naval Academy Virtual Memorial Hall

DPAA Agency Video
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rkxi644lb9c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rkxi644lb9c)

Mary Delach Leonard, “African-American Union Army soldiers died on their way home from war; then history lost their names,” May 24, 2015
St. Louis Public Radio
Materials

- Veteran Profile, Corporal Alva P. Hilscher
- Map of Jefferson Barracks
- “African-American Union Army soldiers died on their way home from war; then history lost their names” handout
- Group Activity A handout
- Group Activity B handout
- Group Activity C handout
- Group Activity D handout
- Pens or pencils

Activity Preparation

- Divide students into four groups (A, B, C, and D).
- Make one copy of the Veteran Profile, Corporal Alva P. Hilscher for teacher use.
- Make five copies of the Map of Jefferson Barracks (one for teacher use and one for each group of students).
- Make copies of “African-American Union Army soldiers died on their way home from war; then history lost their names” handout (one for every student and the teacher).
- Make copies of Group Activity A handout (one for every student assigned to Group A and the teacher).
• Make copies of Group Activity B handout (one for every student assigned to Group B and the teacher).

• Make copies of Group Activity C handout (one for every student assigned to Group C and the teacher).

• Make copies of Group Activity D handout (one for every student assigned to Group D and the teacher).

• Bring a device to listen to the St. Louis Public radio story (or print out the story if preferred).

• Gather pens or pencils.

**Procedure**

**Activity One: Cemetery Etiquette (15 minutes)**

• Board the bus at school and ask students: *What do you think is the proper behavior at a cemetery and why? Do you think there is a different way to behave at military cemeteries than at regular cemeteries? Why is it important to respect this space?*

• Inform students of any cemetery behavior they have not come up with themselves.

**Teacher Tip:** *Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery is an active cemetery, and it averages 17 burials each day. Please remind students to be extra respectful if they encounter a service.*

**Activity Two: Visit to Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery (60 minutes)**

• Take students to the grave of Corporal Alva P. Hilscher (Section I, Grave 2555).
  
  ◦ Ask students, *What clues to Corporal Hilscher’s life can we learn from his grave stone?*
  
  ◦ Ask a student to read the Veteran Profile, Corporal Alva P. Hilscher.
  
  ◦ Ask students,
    
    - *How does the profile give you insight to this man’s life?*
    
    - *Look around you. How is Corporal Hilscher similar to or different from the men and women buried in this section?*
    
    - *What other observations can you make about the graves in this section?*
• Walk or drive to section 57 and find the stone obelisk, a group burial monument to the members of the 56th Infantry Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops who died of cholera in August 1866 (Section 57, Grave 15009).
  ◦ Distribute one “African-American Union Army soldiers died on the way home from war; then history lost their names” handout to each student.
  ◦ Play the story, “African-American Union Army soldiers died on their way home from war; then history lost their names” from St. Louis Public Radio. If preferred, you can print the story and read it aloud.
  ◦ Allow students time to complete the response on the handout.
  ◦ Invite students to share their responses with the group.
• Walk or drive to the area containing sections 79, 80, 81, and 82.
  ◦ Divide students into pre-assigned groups.
  ◦ Distribute one map to each group.
  ◦ Explain how the grave numbering system works. Students can follow the map to the correct section and use the numbers on the back of the graves to find their assigned location.
  ◦ Explain that Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery is unique because there are more than 560 group burials, many in this area.
  ◦ Ask students, Why might group burials be needed?
  ◦ Direct each group of students to find their particular grave, complete the response, and return to the meeting point. Give students a specific time to return.
• Ask members of each group to share the story of the grave that they visited. Share in order to maintain chronology (A, then B, etc.)

Assessment

• Assign the reflection question to be completed upon return to school: How do national cemeteries memorialize those killed in war as well as veterans? Based on what you learned today, what questions do you have and how might you go about finding those answers?

Methods for Extension

• Students can select a grave at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery to research on their own.
• Students interested in learning more about the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) can explore their website or watch the DPAA Agency Video on YouTube.
"African-American Union Army soldiers died on their way home from war; then history lost their names"

Memorial to members of the 56th Infantry Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops who died of cholera in August 1866
Location: Section 57, Grave 15009
**Task:** Listen to the story, “African-American Union Army soldiers died on their way home from war; then history lost their names,” from St. Louis Public Radio. If preferred, you can print the story and read it aloud.

Mary Delach Leonard, “African-American Union Army soldiers died on their way home from war; then history lost their names,” May 24, 2015
St. Louis Public Radio
http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/african-american-union-army-soldiers-died-their-way-home-war-then-history-lost-their-names

**Response:** How has this memorial changed over time? In what ways has the local community impacted this memorial?
Group Activity A
Grave of Bruce Avery Van Voorhis and his crew of Bombing Squadron 102, July 6, 1943

Location: Section 79, Graves 279-281

Task: Read the following story, from the U.S. Naval Academy, of Bruce Avery Van Voorhis.

Biography
“Bruce Avery Van Voorhis (29 January 1908 - 6 July 1943) was a United States Navy aviator who was shot down in the Pacific theater during World War II. For his heroic action on July 6, 1943, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Van Voorhis was born on 29 January 1908 in Aberdeen, Washington, and grew up in Nevada. He was appointed to the Naval Academy in June 1925.

“Following graduation from the Academy on 6 June 1929, Ensign Van Voorhis reported for duty in the battleship Mississipi (BB-41). That assignment lasted until November 1930 when he transferred to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Florida, for aviation training.

“He received his wings on 3 September 1931, and was assigned to the Maryland (BB-46) as a member of Observation Squadron 4B (VO-4B). In June 1934, he transferred to Bombing Squadron 5B on board the aircraft carrier Ranger (CV-4), and soon thereafter, to VB-2B attached to Saratoga (CV-3). From July 1935 until May 1937, he served in the Panama Canal Zone and flew patrols from Coco Solo with Patrol Squadron 2F (VP-2F). The following June, 1938, Van Voorhis returned to carried-based aviation and served first in Enterprise (CV-6), then in Yorktown (CV-5), and finally back to Enterprise. In June 1940, Van Voorhis joined the aviation unit assigned to the light cruiser Honolulu (CL-48) where he served for a year. In July 1941, he reported for duty at the Naval Air Station, Anacostia, where he served until November 1942.

“In December 1942, Van Voorhis, a Lieutenant Commander since July, assumed command of VP-14, but soon thereafter took command of VB-102. While serving in that capacity, LCDR Van Voorhis gave his life for his country near Hare Island of Kapingamarangi Atoll, the southernmost of the Eastern Caroline Islands. After a 700-mile flight alone, LCDR Van Voorhis launched successive bombing and strafing attacks on the enemy ground installations. During his onslaught, he succeeded in destroying a radio station, anti-aircraft emplacements, and at least one airborne fighter as well as three others on the water.
However, the strength of Japanese aerial opposition eventually forced Van Voorhis lower and lower until either the intense anti-aircraft barrage, the fighters, or-perhaps-his own bomb blasts knocked him out of the sky near the island. For the ‘conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity’ he displayed in his ‘lone but relentless battle against overwhelming opposition . . . ’ He died on July 6, 1943 and was awarded the Medal of Honor, posthumously.”

**Medal of Honor Citation**

“The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pride in presenting the Medal of Honor (Posthumously) to Lieutenant Commander Bruce Avery Van Voorhis, United States Navy, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as Squadron Commander of Bombing Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWO (VB-102) and as Plane Commander of a PB4Y-I Patrol Bomber operating against the enemy on Japanese-held Greenwich Island during the battle of the Solomon Islands, 6 July 1943. Fully aware of the limited chance of surviving an urgent mission, voluntarily undertaken to prevent a surprise Japanese attack against our forces, Lieutenant Commander Van Voorhis took off in total darkness on a perilous 700-mile flight without escort or support. Successful in reaching his objective despite treacherous and varying winds, low visibility and difficult terrain, he fought a lone but relentless battle under fierce anti-aircraft fire and overwhelming aerial opposition. Forced lower and lower by pursuing planes, he coolly persisted in his mission of destruction. Abandoning all chance of a safe return he executed six bold ground-level attacks to demolish the enemy's vital radio station, installations, anti-aircraft guns and crews with bombs and machinegun [sic] fire, and to destroy one fighter plane in the air and three on the water. Caught in his own bomb blast, Lieutenant Commander Van Voorhis crashed into the lagoon off the beach, sacrificing himself in a single-handed fight against almost insuperable odds, to make a distinctive contribution to our continued offensive in driving the Japanese from the Solomons and, by his superb daring, courage and resoluteness of purpose, enhanced the finest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.”
**Response:** How does this story impact the way that you view this grave?
Group Activity B

Grave of the crew from the 13th Air Force, killed in action January 28, 1944

Location: Section 81, Graves 387-388

Task: Read the following Missing Air Crew Report (MACR).
CONFIDENTIAL

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT - Sample Form (Cont’d).

Check Only One Column

Name in Full
(Last Name First)

Serial Number

Radio

Sighted

Crash

Landing

Contacted By

Last Name

Passed

Saw

Forced

1

2

LaFortune Jr., Arthur A.

D/O 4-66163

12. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, ANSWER YES TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS: (a) Parachutes were used; (b) Persons were seen walking away from scene of crash; or (c) Any other reason (Specify) See below.

13. ATTACH AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH, MAP, CHART, OR SKETCH, SHewing APPROXIMATE LOCATION WHERE AIRCRAFT WAS LAST SEEN.

14. ATTACH EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTION OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES PERTAINING TO MISSING AIRCRAFT.

15. ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND GIVE NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE HERE.

Date of Report 9 February 1944

(Signature of Preparing Officer)

HUBERT E. HALL

2nd Lt., Air Corps.

#12. Plane crashed but was not observed to have burned.

STATEMENT

Just as we were passing over the runway I looked over to the left and saw my Milliland’s ship as it was about 100 ft. above the trees with the left wing pointed to the ground. The nose dropped immediately and he made about 1½ turns very fast, before he was out of sight in the trees and a moment later struck the ground. I saw no smoke or indication that the ship was on fire. It was still in one piece. Believe that the pilot was hit with flak fire or his cables shot away causing the ship to go out of control.

/s/ Arthur A. LaFortune, Jr.,

ARThur A. LaFOrTUnE, Jr.,

F/O, 70th Bomb Squadron (M)

A TRUE COPY:

HUBERT E. HALL

2nd Lieut., Air Corps,

Adjutant.
Response: The crew of this plane was discovered and interred here at Jefferson Barracks in 1959. How does this primary document impact the way that you view this grave?
Group Activity C

Grave of the crew and passengers from the Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 463, killed January 8, 1968
18 miles south of Dong Ha, South Vietnam

Location: Section 81, Graves 270-272

Task: Read the following excerpts from documents from the U.S. Marine Corps documenting the crash. This is one of the worst crashes in the history of helicopters.

From Marine Observation Squadron 2, Marine Aircraft Group 16 Command Chronology
January 1-31, 1968

"At 19:15 Hours one HMH-463 CH-53A (YH-37 Bureau Number 153710) was declared overdue and missing after disappearing during an IFR flight. Search and rescue operations commenced."

On January 9 and 10, "The search for the missing CH-53A aircraft continued with negative sightings and search operations hampered by inclement weather." On January 11, "The wreckage of the missing CH-53A aircraft was sighted by search aircraft at coord. YD234260, no apparent survivors. Adverse weather conditions precluded a search of the crash site until 19 Jan when a recon team was inserted. The aircraft suffered severe burn damage and there was no possibility of survivors."

The crew was declared killed in action on February 26, 1968.

Casualty List (Military)

Crew (5):
Chapman, John Thomas Capt Co-Pilot HMH-463 MAG-16
Olson, Bennett Walfred SSgt Gunner HMH-463 MAG-16
Schram, Frederick Lloyd Capt Pilot HMH-463 MAG-16
Strand Jr., Philip Stanley Cpl Crew Chief HMH-463 MAG-16
Venegas, Vernon Bernabe Cpl Gunner HMH-463 MAG-16

Passengers (41):
Bardach, Alan Jensen 1stLt HHC 507thTransGrp USARV
Barry, Kenneth Donald PFC H&SCo/1/1 1stMarDiv
Curry, Hovey Rice PFC A/1/1 1stMarDiv
Cyr, Lawrence Joseph SgtMaj HQBtty/4/12 3rdMarDiv
Day, Michael Robert Sgt A/3rdTankBn 3rdMarDiv
Diaz, Daniel PFC HQCo/3rdMarines 3rdMarDiv
Dietz, Gary Philip Cpl B/1stAmtracBn 3rdMarDiv
Dornak, Leonard Edward 1stLt CommSuptBn/7thCommBn 1stMarDiv
Eaddy, Ishmell PFC E/2/9 3rdMarDiv
Ellis, George Walter Col H&SCo 3rdMAF
Fennell, Alton Jimmy PFC 3rdMAF
Fox, Ronald Lee LCpl Battl/1/12 3rdMarDiv
Freeman, Glenn Wayne Cpl 3rdMAF
Fulwider, Daniel Raymond Sgt 3rdMAF
Garza, Vicente Sgt 3DATCo/3TANKBn 3rdMarDiv
Grimes, Thomas Allen SSgt K/3/26 3rdMarDiv
Hall, Michael Jennings 2ndLt H&SCo/FLSG"B"/ForceLogCom
Hetland, Ronald Lee LCpl BttyE/2/12 3rdMarDiv
Jackson, Donney Lyrce HM3 Corpsman 4/12 3rdMarDiv
Jones Jr., Halcott Pride HM2 Corpsman 1/4 3rdMarDiv
Kirschner, Stephen Benjamin PVT HQBtty/1/12 3rdMarDiv
May, Craig Nolan LCpl H&SCo/1/1 1stMarDiv
Miller, James Irvin LCpl C/1/1 1stMarDiv
Nicholson, David Donell Cpl E/2/9 3rdMarDiv
Patrick, Jerry PFC H&SCo/1/1 1stMarDiv
Pintar, James Albert LCpl H&SCo/1/1 1stMarDiv
Price Jr., Millard Ernest WO HQCo/HQBn/3rdMarDiv
Protano Jr., Guy Jerry LCpl G/2/1 1stMarDiv
Rumley, Richard Allen Cpl A/1/1 1stMarDiv
Schautteet Jr., Louis L LCpl A/1/1 1stMarDiv
Shaffer Jr., Wallace Clair HM3 Corpsman 3rdMedBn 3rdMarDiv
Sigmon, Harold Wayne Sgt B/1/4 3rdMarDiv
Skarman, Orval Harry Sgt L/3/3/3rdMarDiv
Smith, Charles Herbert LCpl H&SCo/3/2 3rdMarDiv
Teeter, Gary Alan LCpl C/1/1 1stMarDiv
Ugino, John Joseph PFC M/3/26 3rdMarDiv
Vaught, Michael Eugene LCpl A/1/4 3rdMarDiv
White, Craig Preston LCpl C/1/1 1stMarDiv
White, Raymond PFC A/1/1 1stMarDiv
Wilson, Robert Charles PFC 1/D/1/1, 1stMARDIV
Zirfas, Ewald Capt 507thTransGrp/TMA/MACV

Casualty List (Civilian)
Claudio, Thomas C.
Nicely, Coy

Of those killed in this crash, 43 were interred at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery on July 23, 1968.
Response: How does this grave remember the crew and passengers of this crash? How do these primary documents impact the way that you view this grave?
Group Activity D
Grave of Michael Blassie

Location: Section 85, Grave 1

Task: Read this article from the U.S. National Library of Medicine and respond to the question at the end.

“Michael Blassie: Unknown No More,” U.S. National Library of Medicine

We want the truth, we want to bring him home.
—Jean Blassie, mother of 1st Lt. Michael Blassie, 1998

It may be that forensic science has reached the point where there will be no other unknowns in any war.

“On Memorial Day 1984, the remains of a soldier killed during the Vietnam War were laid to rest in the Tomb of the Unknown at Arlington National Cemetery. A decade later, however, questions began to arise about the identity of this unknown soldier.

“First Lieutenant Michael Joseph Blassie, 24, was shot down over South Vietnam in 1972 and presumed dead. When family members received word that his remains might be buried in the Tomb of the Unknown, they petitioned the Department of Defense to open the site and conduct previously unavailable DNA testing. In 1998 the Tomb of the Unknown was opened and the remains of the Vietnam Unknown—identified as X-26—were removed.

“Forensic anthropologists took the aged and damaged samples of bone for mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) testing. Because mtDNA is passed along the maternal line, scientists compared the Unknown Soldier’s DNA against two samples submitted by First Lieutenant Blassie’s mother and sister and found a match.

“On July 11, 1998, 1st Lt. Michael Blassie was buried with full military honors in Jefferson National Cemetery, Missouri, near his hometown, in the same cemetery as his father.
Going further: Lt. Blassie and the unknown soldier

“Michael Joseph Blassie, the oldest of five children of a St. Louis meat cutter, entered the Air Force Academy in 1966 and received his officer's commission in June 1970. During a tour of Vietnam, he served as a member of the 8th Special Operations Squadron. On May 11, 1972, at age 24, his A-37B Dragonfly aircraft was shot down near An Loc, about 60 miles north of Saigon.

“Immediate recovery attempts were launched, but Blassie had crashed in an area controlled by enemy forces so it was impossible to examine the crash site. Five months later, during a sweep of the area, a South Vietnamese Army patrol recovered a pelvis, an upper arm bone, and some ribs, as well as the remnants of a flight suit, a life raft, pieces of a parachute, and part of a USAF holster. The remains and associated materials were eventually turned over to the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii for analysis and identification. They were initially classified as belonging to Lt. Blassie. However, analysis at the time suggested that the remains were not a compelling match to Blassie's age and height. With the conflicting information between the forensic analysis and the physical evidence, the remains were designated as "Unknown" and assigned the number "X-26."

“The timely and accurate identification of men and women who die while serving in the armed forces has long been a priority for the United States government. The Armed Forces have adopted the latest advances in fingerprint and dental identification, and forensic anthropology and radiology. But not all remains can be identified with such methods. Records can get damaged or destroyed, and post-mortem materials can be affected by decomposition, body fragmentation and exposure to heat.

“With the invention of the polymerase chain reaction in 1985, DNA analysis moved to the forefront of forensic technologies. In 1991 the Department of Defense founded the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL). AFDIL has used DNA analysis to identify the remains of at least 150 military personnel from Vietnam, Korea, and World War 2, and assisted in the identification of victims from high profile disasters, both natural and man-made. Now that DNA samples are taken from everyone who joins the U.S. Armed Forces, there may never be another American 'unknown soldier'.

Mitochondrial DNA testing

“Human beings have copies of DNA from each biological parent, stored in the nucleus of every cell. DNA is also stored in tiny, energy-producing structures in the cells, called mitochondria. Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) differs from nuclear DNA because human beings inherit mtDNA solely from the mother and share this information with siblings and maternal relatives. Unlike nuclear DNA, each cell carries more than a hundred copies of mtDNA, since each cell contains many mitochondria but only one nucleus. The ability to match mtDNA between related individuals, and the fact that it does not degrade as rapidly as nuclear DNA, makes it a valuable tool in the identification of human remains.
Response: How has science impacted history? How does the story of First Lieutenant Blassie give hope to other families whose loved ones may be buried here in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery?
Corporal Alva P. Hilscher

Hometown: Belleville, Illinois
Entered Service: July 23, 1948
Unit: 1st Marine Division, 1st Shore Party Battalion, Company B
Rank: Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps
Cemetery: Site 2555, Section I
Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery
St. Louis, Missouri

February 16, 1931 - May 11, 1981

RESEARCHED BY KATIE HOERNER AND MARION TOUZEL
Before the War

On February 16, 1931, Alva Paul Hilscher was born in Leavenworth County, Kansas to Herman and Carolyn Hilscher. He had an older brother, Herman, Jr. According to the 1930 census, Herman Hilscher, Sr. worked as a carpenter at a machine manufacturing company.

Herman and Carolyn divorced at some point after Alva’s birth. According to the 1940 federal census, Alva and Herman, Jr. lived with their father and his new wife, Virginia F. Hilscher. Herman, Sr. was now employed by the federal government as a carpenter at a military base (most likely at Fort Leavenworth).

At age 17, Alva petitioned to join the U.S. Marine Corps. His mother, Carolyn Hilscher McCasland (she was remarried at this time) gave permission for him to enlist underage. He indicated two years experience as a farm hand as well as experience operating a donut fryer.

Consent of Parents or Guardian to Enlistment of a Minor in the Marine Corps

\[\text{Signature:} \quad \text{Carolyn McCasland}\]

The Hilscher family in Leavenworth County, Kansas, shortly before Alva’s birth, 1930. National Archives and Records Administration.

The Hilscher family in Leavenworth County, Kansas, 1940. National Archives and Records Administration.

Military Experience

Hilscher enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on July 23, 1948 and arrived at Parris Island, South Carolina, on July 25. His service took him to various places, including training exercises in Puerto Rico and Cuba in February and March 1949.

As tension escalated in Korea, he sailed on the USS General H.W. Butner from San Diego to Japan, arriving on August 29, 1950 and then aboard LST Q-036 from Kobe, Japan to Korea. He arrived in Korea on September 15, 1950 with the 1st Marine Division, 1st Shore Party Battalion, Company B.

Hilscher’s primary job in the Marines was to work as a Shore Party Man. He marked beaches, unloaded ships, controlled traffic, removed mines, set up communications, established dump and supply points, and engaged in reconnaissance missions. The 1st Shore Party Battalion moved cargo inland to support Marines as they advanced.

Hilscher’s unit participated in the Incheon landings, the assault and seizure of Seoul, and the Wonsan-Hungnam-Chosin Campaign. He served in Korea from September 15, 1950 to September 11, 1951. He was hospitalized for part of his deployment in November and December 1950.

He returned to San Francisco on the USS Menald, sailing from Kobe, Japan, on November 25, 1951.
Veteran Experience


Hilshcer died of cancer on May 11, 1981. His widow moved to Virginia Beach to live with their eldest daughter, Patricia, until her death on November 11, 2016.

Commemoration

Alva Paul Hilscher, Sr. was laid to rest in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis County, Missouri.

Alva Paul Hilscher, Sr.’s grave at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri. Courtesy of Lynne O’Hara.
Bibliography

1st Marine Division, Korea; General Administrative Files, September 1950-March 1955, Record Group 127 (Box 226); National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.


Alva P. Hilscher, Official Military Personnel File, Department of the Navy. U.S. Marine Corps, Record of the U.S. Marine Corps, RG 127, National Archives and Records Administration - St. Louis.


Hilscher, Patricia. E-mail message to author. September 24, 2018.


