

The undying agony of a missing son

Forty-five years ago, a soldier disappears in Korean battle

EDITOR'S NOTE: In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, Lawrence Township Memorial Committee, in cooperation with the Ledger, will feature a column each week during the anniversary year profiling a Lawrence resident.

"MISSING IN ACTION" — the dreaded words that mothers, wives and loved ones hope never to hear. Words that mean weeks, months or years of anxiety and fear of the unknown, hoping and praying for the day when their serviceman will return. Patience and prayer are sometimes rewarded, but many times they are not, and the anguish never ends.

Private First Class Daniel J. DiSylvester has been missing since Nov. 2, 1950, when as a rifleman with the 8th Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division,

his forward position was overrun by North Korean and Chinese Communists at Unsan, North Korea.

PFC DiSylvester is representative of all POW/MIA's — 78,750 in World War II, 8,177 in Korea, and 2,273 in Vietnam. They are entombed in ships and planes at the bottom of the sea, buried in unmarked graves of old prison camps, and scattered on the world's battlefields. They share a common bond with each other, but have little else. They died with honor, but were deprived of an honorable burial and an identifiable grave. Their final resting places are obscured and will never be decorated with flowers or feel the tears of their families left behind. Their suffering is over, but not for their families, who can never visit them and are haunted by never knowing how, where, or why. They are left with

only photographs and memories, and eventually they too will fade away.

Dan DiSylvester was born on April 22, 1926, in the Eldridge Park section of Lawrence, attended local schools and enlisted in the U.S. Navy on April 25, 1944.

His older brothers, Louis and Thomas, were already serving in the Army overseas. As a fireman 2nd Class, he saw action in the North Atlantic and Europe, and was discharged in May, 1946. When his family opened a popular restaurant adjacent to their home on Lawn Park Avenue, Dan became the chef and was a familiar sight in his white uniform as he prepared Italian specialty dishes and tomato pies for customers. His sisters, Theresa Macheda and Josephine Pasquito, describe Danny as a happy-go-lucky young man who loved baseball, but didn't seem like he really knew what he wanted to do. After several years at the restaurant, he became dissatisfied with the routine and decided to return to the military. Since he was prone to seasickness, he ruled out the Navy, and early in 1949 he enlisted in the U.S. Army. Following basic training he was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division in Japan that same year.

On June 25, 1950, the unrest between South Korea and the Communist North exploded as the North Korean Peoples Army stormed across the 38th Parallel, making the "Land of the Morning Calm" a bloody battlefield for the next three years.

The 1st Cavalry was sent to Korea on July 18 and were immediately deployed at the front to establish a line in a small southeastern corner of the country, known as the Pusan Perimeter. On Sept. 15, an amphibious landing at Inchon helped the troops in the Perimeter to break out, and they soon pushed their way back to the 38th Parallel. On Oct. 24, General MacArthur ordered all forces to drive north-

ward to the Yalu River, bordering Manchuria, thereby securing all of Korea. As American and ROK forces

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approached the Yalu, large numbers of Chinese troops stealthily crossed into North Korea, annihilating the 6th ROK Division within several days. The intervention of the Chinese ushered in a new phase of the war.

On Oct. 28, the 1st Cavalry was sent to reinforce the battered 1st ROK Division, taking up positions around the town of Unsan in Northwest Korea. On Nov. 1, just after dusk, a screaming "human sea" of Chinese, sounding bugles and whistles, overran the forward position of Dan's regiment. Forced to fall back, 5,000 foot troopers were cut off and ambushed near a dry river bed southwest of Unsan, where the Communists made their strongest fight of the entire campaign. It was a disaster for the 8th Regiment, and Division Headquarters ordered them to fight their way out of the trap, as reinforcements could not reach them.

"The last letter we received from Danny," Theresa Macheda relates, "was late in October, and he had just seen a U.S.C. show with Bob Hope. The next word we had was when two Army officers from Ft. Dix came to our home on a Monday evening when the restaurant was closed, and informed us that Danny was missing in action. My mother was hysterical and we were all devastated by the news. It was a long time before we heard anything else, and when we made inquiry, we received a letter dated Aug. 22, 1952, from the Army

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