

# 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.

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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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## VETERAN PROFILE

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### Nicholas Loveless

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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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Daniel DiSylvester in a photo taken in 1950, shortly before he was listed as missing in action in Korea.

stating that no additional information had been found, but that the Army was engaged in constant and untiring efforts to account for missing person-

nel. A year went by without word, and another letter dated July 31, 1953, said there was still no additional information".

On July 27, 1953, after two years of peace talks, the armistice was signed and shortly afterward, all prisoners were repatriated. Dan was not among them and hope for his survival faded. The next letter, dated Dec. 31, 1953, from the adjutant general, now stated, "The finding of the Army must terminate his absence to be a presumptive finding of death." An accompanying document, "Finding Death of Missing Person" was enclosed and listed Nov. 2, 1950 as the probable date. A few days later, Mrs. DiSylvester received the Purple Heart Medal posthumously, and its inscribed certificate.

Several weeks later, two cartons containing personal effects of Dan were sent to Mrs. DiSylvester, but his dog tags were not included, and have never been located. Presumably his personal effects had been left at his base camp when he was sent to Unsan. The name of John M. Lawson, of Belleville, Mich., was also given to Mrs. DiSylvester, as a witness to Dan's death, however after a photograph was sent to Mr. Lawson, he could not identify it. The final letter from the Army was dated Feb. 15, 1955, and requested civilian dental records to be used in the event of any future investigation.



The fate of PFC Daniel DiSylvester can only be speculation. The ruthless indifference to taking prisoners, and the stories of torture, disease and starvation that emerged from the North Korean and Chinese prison camps in the Korean War were shocking to America's sensibilities. Dan's 8th Cavalry Regiment had been vastly out-numbered and suffered terrible losses. Even those taken prisoner did not all survive and lie somewhere in China or Korea.

On July 27, the Korean Veterans War Memorial will be unveiled on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. and there will be a mass assembly of Korean War veterans present. It will be the only visible marker that Dan and his fellow MIAs of the Ko-

See PROFILE, Page 3A

## Profile

Continued from Page 2A

rean War will ever have, and take the place of one that should mark their own final resting places.

In spite of the official Army findings, Mrs. Jennie DiSylvester never gave up hope that someday her son would return. For almost 45 years she kept her lonely vigil in the hope that he would miraculously come home. Year after year she attended Memorial Day services as he was honored in ceremonies. As she slowly yielded to the infirmities of age, this dedicated Gold Star Mother, who concealed her suffering over the years, quietly passed away on April 29, 1995, at the age of 101, her questions remaining unanswered.

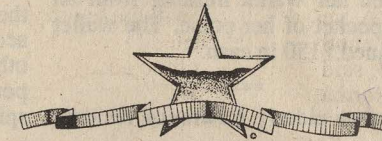
Perhaps the most appropriate tribute to Dan was sent to Mrs. DiSylvester by President Dwight D. Eisenhower along with the Purple Heart Award:

In Grateful Memory of Private First Class Daniel J. DiSylvester. Who died in the service of his country in the military operation in Korea. He stands in the unbroken line of patriots who have dared to die that freedom might live, and grow, and increase its blessing. Freedom lives, and through it, He lives in a way that humbles the understanding of most men.

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*The Veterans Memorial Committee is asking veterans from World War II and other conflicts to provide a photograph in uniform, along with their name, present address, branch of service and unit, where and when*

*they served, their principal assignment and summary of their service. Their individual experiences or unusual stories are also welcomed. All photographs will be returned. Families of deceased veterans are also encouraged to submit articles. All materials should be sent to The Lawrence Township Veterans Memorial Committee, P.O. Box 55966, Trenton, N.J. 08638. Inquires may be made by calling 882-9108.*



### WEEKLY ROSTER OF MEMORIAL DONORS

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Karyn & Richard Loveless  
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## LETTERS TO THE

### Excellent job of profiling veterans

To the editor:

I would like to commend your paper for the excellent community service you are providing for Lawrence Township and it's veterans.

I am referring to the Veteran's Profile column, written by Nick Loveless. Not only does it honor our veterans but also helps in celebrating the 50th anniversary of "VJ" Day and the Victory in the Pacific! Also, we are learning about our Lawrence veterans and what they did in World War II.

Nick is doing an excellent job with this project and I am sure that he is working every walking moment to write and interview the veterans to get these articles published.

Congratulations to the Veterans Memorial Committee, Nick Loveless and to you, Lawrence Ledger!

Jerry A. Festa  
Roxboro Road