



DIOCESE *of* LACROSSE
OFFICE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

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WWII Hero Sgt. Jack Hohlfeld Returns Home to La Crosse After 80 Years; Funeral Mass on August 26th

La Crosse, WI. Sergeant Jack Hohlfeld, a native of La Crosse and Trempealeau, survived the [brutal Bataan Death March](#) during World War II and died while being held captive at the [cruel Cabanatuan Japanese POW](#) camp in the Philippines.

Later buried in a common grave, Jack's remains were only recently identified. Now, more than 80 years later, he is finally returning home to La Crosse and his funeral Mass will be celebrated on August 26.

Born in Vernon County and raised in La Crosse and Trempealeau, Hohlfeld served in the US Army Air Corps and fought valiantly in the Philippines in intense combat. He died in captivity on December 26, 1942, and was buried in Common Grave 811 (CG 811) with five other service members.

The remains in CG 811 were intermingled and difficult to identify due to swampy conditions. Dental records identified three in 1945-1946, but the other three, including Sgt. Hohlfeld, were deemed unidentifiable and moved to the American Military Cemetery in Manila in 1948, where they were listed on the wall of the missing.

Determined to bring her son home, Jack's mother, Mary Hohlfeld, wrote letters to the War Department for years. Jack's niece, Sharon Graw, continued her efforts. In 2015, thanks to Sharon's persistence, agencies renewed their efforts to identify and repatriate Jack's remains.

In 2018, the unidentified remains from CG 811 were moved to the Schofield Barracks mortuary in Hawaii. On May 29, 2024, the Defense POW/MIA Agency confirmed that one set of remains belonged to Sgt. Jack Hohlfeld. Soon, Sgt. Hohlfeld will depart Schofield Barracks, accompanied by a military Escort Officer, and begin his journey home to La Crosse.

Jack is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, WWII POW Medal, Good Conduct Medal, American Defense Medal, Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with service star, WWII Victory Medal, Presidential Unit Citation with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, and Philippine Defense Ribbon with Bronze Star.

A visitation honoring Jack's life will be held on **August 26 at 9:30 am at [St. Patrick Parish](#)**, 1031 Main St, Onalaska, WI. Following this, the Most Reverend [Bishop Gerard Battersby](#), the Bishop of the [Diocese of La Crosse](#) and its 19 counties, will celebrate a funeral Mass. A procession to the Catholic Cemetery on Losey Blvd, La Crosse, will follow for a burial service with full military honors. The public is welcome to attend and support the family as our WWII hero comes home.

“The nation which forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten.”

~ President Calvin Coolidge