



## CPL. Waymon Slaten

December 24, 1931 - September 1, 1950

Waymon Slaten -December 24, 1931 – September 1, 1950

U.S. Army Corporal Waymon Slaten, age 18, fought bravely in the Korean War but was killed September 1, 1950. His body was not recovered from the battlefield, so he was listed as missing in action for 74 years. Waymon was the eighth of nine children born to John William Slaten and Nollie Hornsby Slaten. He was born in Arab in an area just north of town on December 24, 1931. In 1942 when he was 11 years old, his mother Nollie Slaten, died. For three years, John Slaten was without a wife until 1945 when he married Minnie Harden Lawrence, a widow from the Grassy area. Shortly afterwards, Waymon went to live with the families of some of his married siblings, including brothers Alvin “Bud” Slaten and Alton Samuel Slaten.

As a young man, Waymon attended Arab schools. He loved to play football, but his grades kept him from playing on the school teams. On January 5, 1949, just 12 days after his 18th birthday he joined the U.S. Army. On March 28, 1949, Waymon was sent to Fort Lewis, Washington for additional training. On June 25, 1950, the North Korean People’s Army (NKPA) crossed the border into South Korea. Two days later, the U. S. entered the Korean War with the backing of the United Nations. On July 20th, Waymon was on his way to the Far East as a member of Baker Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment (9IR), 2nd Infantry Division (2ID).

The 2ID was the first American Army division to leave the U.S. for the Korean Peninsula and arrived at Pusan Harbor in southeast Korea on July 23rd. On

August 24th, the 2ID relieved the U.S. Army's 24th Infantry Division, which had been on station at the Naktong River Line since July 1st.

On August 31st, Baker Company, joined by the Republic of Korean (ROK) Army, was positioned along the eastern shore of the Naktong River, along the Pusan Perimeter which served as a defensive barrier around the town of Pusan. That night, a large-scale offensive was launched by NKPA forces, penetrating 1st Battalion positions. Heavy American casualties were incurred. During a lull in the battle, Waymon wrote what turned out to be his final letter home:

"Here I am in my fox hole trying to write these few lines. My buddies on each side of me have already got killed and I am expecting to be killed any time. Somebody is going to have to pray. This is all I have time to write. Goodbye forever."

As feared, the enemy started to overrun the 1st Battalion's positions on Hills 209 and 311. Those still alive in Baker Company started to retreat. As Waymon lay dead or dying in the foxhole, a fellow soldier grabbed the letter from his shirt pocket and eventually mailed the letter to his father. The following morning on September 1st, Waymon could not be found.

A relative recalled that during the war Waymon's father lived in a house with no electricity and listened to news of the war on a battery powered radio every night until past midnight but was no longer interested in the news after he was notified his son was missing in action.

For their defense of the Naktong River line, the 2ID was awarded the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation.

On October 22nd, the American Graves Registration Service recovered a set of remains from the base of Hill 209. The remains could not be identified, so they were buried as Unknown X-256 in the United Nations Military Cemetery, at Tanggok, South Korea. After having no further information on his whereabouts, the Army issued a presumptive finding of death for Waymon on December 31, 1953.

In 1954, the remains labeled X-256 were exhumed and re-examined, but still

could not be identified. The remains were ultimately interred as an unknown in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, better known as the Punchbowl.

The U.S. Department of Defense organization tasked with the recovery and identification of missing American service members from the country's past conflicts is the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). In July 2018, DPAA commenced the Korean War Disinterment Project. This was a plan to disinter, in phases, 652 Korean War Unknowns from the Punchbowl. In May 2021, as part of the third phase, the unidentified remains labeled X-256, were exhumed and sent to the DPAA laboratory for further examination at nearby Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

Finally, on August 14, 2024, after a lengthy process of over three years of laboratory analysis that involved collating postmortem and antemortem chest radiographs and comparison of Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) (DNA passed from a mother to male and female offspring) from X-256 and Waymon's family members, a match was made. The mtDNA from X256 matched that from Fayrene Dewberry, his sister, and Shirley Daniels, a maternal niece. This DNA match, radiograph comparisons, and the extensiveness of the circumstantial evidence available confirmed the remains were those of Waymon Slaten.

On November 21st, the Slaten family received their full briefing from Mr. Michael Mee, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky. During the briefing, Mr. Mee informed family members that Waymon's skeletal remains were 95 percent intact.

On January 3, 2025, he arrived home and was received at the Arab Heritage Memorial Chapel. His journey from the Birmingham Shuttlesworth Airport was accompanied by members of the North Alabama District Patriot Guard Riders, the 3Sixty Jeep Club of Cullman, Marshall County Sheriff's Office, and Alabama State Troopers.

CPL Slaten's death occurred prior to the passing of his father and stepmother, sisters Ola Slaten, Marie (Erskin) Brown, Amoline (Peter) Fox, Averoine Ortiz,

and Fayrene (Troy) Dewberry; and brothers Alton, Alvin, and Uless Slaten. He is survived locally by two special relatives, a nephew, Billy Gene Slaten and niece, Mary Sue Smith (Roy Adams). Left to carry on his memory and legacy are many nieces and nephews, and dozens of cousins whom he never met or knew.

The family wants to thank the DPAA for their lengthy and painstaking work to identify Waymon's remains. We also hope for a similar homecoming to occur for the families of CPL John Sherrill Higgins, Jr., PFC Robert Henry Prentice, MSG Leon Baird, and PFC Ernest James Stiefel, Marshall County's other Korean War MIAs.

The final burial of the remains of CPL Waymon Slaten will occur at 1:00 PM on Monday, January 13, 2025, at a graveside service at Gilliam Springs Baptist Church Cemetery with full military honors provided by the U.S. Army. Pastor Jamey Pruett will conduct the graveside service.

All family and friends of Waymon and the Slaten family are invited to attend. In lieu of flowers, it is asked that you donate to the Wounded Warrior Project or Gary Sinise Foundation.

Arab Heritage Memorial Chapel, Directing.

# Cemetery Details

## Gilliam Springs Cemetery

1351 North Brindlee Mountain Parkway  
Arab, AL 35016

# Previous Events

## Graveside Service

JAN 13. 1:00 PM (CT)

Gilliam Springs Cemetery  
1351 North Brindlee Mountain Parkway  
Arab, AL 35016

# Tribute Wall



“ *Serenity Wreath was purchased for the family of CPL. Waymon Slaten.* ”



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January 08, 2025 at 03:49 PM



“ *Margaret Ann Lawrence Little. lit a candle in memory of CPL. Waymon Slaten* ”



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**Margaret Ann Lawrence Little.** - January 06, 2025 at 05:51 PM



“ *Jeff Reynolds lit a candle in memory of CPL. Waymon Slaten* ”



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**Jeff Reynolds** - January 05, 2025 at 10:16 PM

RM

“ *My heartfelt condolences to you and your family; my dad's brother, my uncle Lenis Howard was killed in action in WWII; my dad fought in Korea but I'm not sure where; he did come home but had a hard time. God Bless your family.*



**Ricki Martin** - January 05, 2025 at 05:03 PM

JE

*A picture of Corpl Slaten did hang in the military room at Arab Historic Village.*

**Juanita Edmondson** - January 05, 2025 at 06:28 PM

NB

“ *Nana Baugh lit a candle in memory of CPL. Waymon Slaten*



**Nana Baugh** - January 05, 2025 at 10:08 AM

NM

“ *Nalani Clements McNary sent a virtual gift in memory of CPL. Waymon Slaten*



**Nalani Clements McNary** - January 05, 2025 at 09:34 AM

BB

“ *Bonita Faith Bonds lit a candle in memory of  
CPL. Waymon Slaten*



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**Bonita Faith Bonds** - January 04, 2025 at 10:51 PM