

**VFW AUXILIARY  
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM  
NOVEMBER 2024 SUNFLOWER EXPRESS**

**NOVEMBER 5, 2024 ELECTION DAY-PLEASE VOTE**

By the time most of you read this, the general election will be over and we will have a new leader in the White House and possibly new leaders in our U.S. Senates and House of Representatives, along with new leaders in our State Senate and House of Representatives. No matter the outcome, we all need to know and promote the VFW Priority Goals. Make sure you understand and know what the impact will be for our Veterans, military personnel and their families and let our legislators know that we as Auxiliary members, stand beside our VFW members to pass or block such Legislation. We should hold our legislators accountable for honoring America's promises to our nation's veterans. Remind them that they are elected to serve us, and not for us to serve them.

At this time I would like to share with the Auxiliary members, about two Kansas soldiers, killed during the Normandy landings of World War II, are coming home after 80 years, for proper burial. The Emporia Gazette, in a press release posted by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced that U.S. Army Sgt. John O. Herrick, 19, of Emporia, Kansas killed during World War II, was accounted for August 21, 2023 and will be coming home for burial on November 11, 2024.

In June 1944, Herrick was assigned to Company B, 149<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion in the European Theater. On June 6, 1944, which later became known as D-Day, Herrick and roughly 200 other service members, were aboard Landing Craft Infantry (Large) 92, enroute to Omaha Beach, in Normandy, France. As LCI-92 steamed toward the shore, it struck an underwater mine which caused the craft to burst into flames. The craft was also hit by enemy artillery fire, causing an explosion that ignited the ships fuel stores and instantly killed everyone in the troop compartment. Due to the urgency of the situation, it was impossible for others to search for survivors. Herrick's remains were not accounted for after the war.

A few days later, members of the 500<sup>th</sup> Medical Collecting Company examined the wreckage of LCI-92. The American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), the organization that searched for and recovered fallen American personnel in the European Theater, removed small amounts of remains from LCI-92 before burying them in the United States Military Cemetery St. Laurent-sur-Mer in Normandy. In 1946, AGRC reexamined the remains, identifying them as four separate unknown soldiers, before interring them in Normandy American Battle Monuments Commission site.

In 2021, the Department of Defense and ABMC officials exhumed the comingled remains of the four Unknowns and transferred them to the DPAA Laboratory for analysis. There Herrick's remains were successfully identified using mitochondrial DNA and Y-chromosome DNA analysis. Also in February this year, the DPAA announced it had also recovered the remains of Elmo F. Hartwick, 38, of Onaga, Kansas. He was on board the same landing craft as Herrick when he too was killed in action. His remains are set to be buried in his hometown at a later date.

Let us remember these brave men and support their families and their communities as they come home to their final resting place.

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