

In Loving Memory of



Vincent Angelo Vega

2 August, 1931 - 5 July, 1950

5 October, 2025

11:00 AM

St. Joseph Catholic Church
416 N. Chicago St., Joliet, IL

Private First-Class Vincent A. Vega of Chicago was born on Sunday, August 2, 1931. At just 18 years old, he was declared Missing in Action after the July 5, 1950 Battle at Osan in South Korea; he made the ultimate sacrifice in service to his country.

PFC Vega grew up in Chicago, Illinois, where he and his five siblings were orphaned early in life. The children leaned on the strength of their community and the support of local children's homes, where Vincent and his siblings spent their formative years. As he approached adulthood, Vincent understood that he needed to forge his own path. With conflict brewing in Korea, he made the courageous decision to enlist in the United States Army - a choice that offered a young man like Vincent both purpose and a promising start to life.

One of the few photos that exists of Vincent captures him standing proudly in uniform on the steps of the orphanage that had been his home. His smile in that image speaks volumes: of pride, hope, and expectation. PFC Vega served honorably in the United States Army's Company B, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division.

In late June 1950, over 100,000 troops from the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China advanced to unify Korea under communist control, overwhelming South Korean Army forces. Vincent's unit, the 24th Infantry Division, was deployed to Korea as a response, and delayed by inclement weather, arrived in South Korea on July 2nd. They immediately rushed northward to Taejon to provide support, as part of Task Force Smith (reinforced by elements from the 52nd Field Artillery Battalion). Given the urgent circumstances, Company B and others were sent to Pyongtaek on July 3rd to prevent access via the dry riverbed north of the city. They hastily constructed fighting positions, but in the early hours of July 5th were attacked by a vastly larger force including at least a full infantry regiment and "a long column of enemy tanks." Despite their determined efforts to hold off the vastly superior enemy troops, they received orders to retreat at 1:30 pm on July 5, 1950. By then, the enemy had almost completely surrounded them. Some U.S. troops succeeded in departing in small groups, utilizing trucks to evacuate Osan. Review the following day from the engagement at Osan indicated "about 150 men killed, wounded, or missing," with the heaviest losses reported from Company B, to which PFC Vincent Vega was assigned. He was listed as missing in action during the battle at Osan.

Although his remains were lost to the field of battle, the United States Army remained steadfast in its commitment to return every soldier home. Vincent was officially listed as presumed dead on December 31, 1953 and declared unrecoverable on January 16, 1956. Nonetheless, the Army continued efforts to find and repatriate the remains of all the missing. In 1966 the U.S. Army was alerted to the finding of previously undiscovered unidentified remains. At the time, the technology needed to confirm their identity did not yet exist. The remains were respectfully laid to rest in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii, commonly referred to as the "Punchbowl," as a Korean War Unknown. Vincent's remains were exhumed in August 2021, decades afterwards, as part of ongoing attempts to identify fallen service members. Using advanced forensic tools and DNA analysis, scientists were finally able to identify the remains as belonging to PFC Vincent A. Vega.

After 75 years, Vincent is finally home. His final resting place will be among fellow veterans at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois - a homecoming long overdue and befitting a hero.

Because Vincent and his siblings were orphaned as children, although they loved one another, their childhoods were marked by separation and infrequent visits. Raised at times in different locations, they lost touch as adults. Over the years, two of Vincent's siblings mounted separate search efforts to find him - unaware that the other was doing the same. While not all the siblings lived to witness Vincent's homecoming, those who remain do so with deep gratitude for the U. S. Army's unwavering dedication to reuniting families and honoring the fallen. Vincent's homecoming has become a reunion in more ways than one. His surviving relatives look forward to celebrating his life and sacrifice together -- while reconnecting and meeting each other's families for the first time. Though Vincent's life was marked by hardship and sorrow, his story endures as a powerful testament to resilience, devotion, and hope. Vincent, once known solely to his loved ones, will now have his story told and his sacrifice honored by the nation as he truly deserves.

PFC Vega earned the following Awards and Decorations for his service to our country: Purple Heart, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal with one Bronze Service Star, Presidential Unit Citation, Combat Infantryman Badge, United Nations Service Medal, Republic of Korea-Korean War Service Medal, and Republic of Korea-Presidential Unit Citation.

PFC Vincent Vega is survived by his brothers Joseph (Susan) Vega and Richard (Myrtha) Vega, his sister Anita Vega, his nieces Marian (Richard) Vega Clancy, Barbara Schoenfeld, Susan Moy, and his nephews Evan Vega, Edward Vega, Louis (Saraphia) Vasquez and Andrew Novak. He was preceded in death by his sisters Esther (Louis) Vasquez, who was instrumental in the search for his remains and unfortunately passed away before positive identification was secured, and Mary (Frank) Novak.

Order of Service

Processional

How Great Thou Art

1st Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Michael Brown, Vincent's great-nephew

Responsorial Psalm

The Lord is My Shepherd, There is Nothing I Shall Want

2nd Reading: 2nd Book of Timothy

Edward Vega, Vincent's nephew

Prayers of the Faithful

Richard Vega, Vincent's brother

Gospel: John 11:21-27

Offertory Song

Ave Maria

Gift Bearers

Louis Vasquez, Vincent's nephew

Barbara Schoenfeld-Brown, Vincent's neice

Communion

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Commendation

Amazing Grace

Recessional

Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory

For this Mass
Father John Hornicak, Pastor
Organist: Pat Marentic
Soloist:

For escort, "thunderous" procession, and final salute to
PFC Vincent A Vega
Rolling Thunder

With profound thanks to the United States Army
we honor the unwavering dedication of the United States
Army in the recovery of PFC Vincent A. Vega's remains—
bringing him home from Korea and bestowing upon him the
honors befitting his sacrifice, service, and
enduring place in our family's heart

Thank You