



THE ROAD HOME

It was January 24, 1944, just outside of Isola Bella, Italy.¹ At that time of year, the skies are usually gray and overcast, and the temperature hovers in the mid-teens to low 20's with a couple of inches of snow.² That is what twenty-four-year-old Technician Fifth Grade Eric G. Gibson was facing as he crawled out of the ditch, reeling from the concussive force of heavy artillery fire.³

He and his tiny band of replacements were in the middle of a fierce battle involving over 70,000 German soldiers that had assembled against the approximately 36,000 U.S. soldiers who had landed ashore.⁴ Gibson was a cook—a member of the Quartermaster Corps that has been providing logistical support for the Army since 1775.⁵

As he crawled up out of the ditch, he started taking fire from two enemy combatants.⁶ He killed one and captured the other.⁷ When his squad started taking fire from a machine gun about 200 yards down the ditch, he crawled 125 yards through heavy artillery fire and the cross-fire of two machine guns to throw two grenades into the embankment where the machine gun nest was located.⁸

After he made sure his squad was secure, Gibson went on ahead until he came to a bend in the ditch. The next thing the squad heard was machine-gun fire. They moved forward and found Gibson's body. This young cook was gone, but not until after he had eliminated the enemy threat.⁹ That is the Quartermaster Corps in action.

Technician Fifth Grade Eric G. Gibson was buried in Nora Cemetery in Rice Lake, Wisconsin.¹⁰ It took almost four years for his remains to be identified, transported, and interred in this private cemetery near his parents' home.¹¹ Members of the Quartermaster Corps were the ones who brought him home.

Since 1862, the Quartermaster Corp has been responsible for caring for the remains of deceased service members, ensuring a proper burial, and maintaining our country's national cemeteries.¹² 1862 was a bloody year. It was the year of the Battle of Shiloh, with nearly 24,000 casualties in two days.¹³ Then, there was the Battle of Antietam, with nearly 23,000 casualties in one day.¹⁴ In between, was the Peninsula Campaign with over 20,000 casualties in and around northern Virginia.¹⁵ As General Robert E. Lee wrote, "Among the dead there will be found many whose names will ever be associated with the great events in which they all bore so honorable a part."¹⁶

There were many heroes to bury, and so, in July 1862, Congress authorized President Lincoln "to purchase cemetery grounds . . . to be used as a national cemetery for soldiers who shall have died in the service of the country."¹⁷ The Act made the Quartermaster Corps responsible for the care and administration of the national cemetery system.¹⁸ The assignment made sense. The Quartermaster Department was already assigned the responsibility of walking through the battlefields to identify and provide a proper burial for fallen soldiers on or near the battlegrounds. It made sense that it would also be responsible for ensuring these soldiers had a dedicated resting place where they could be honored and remembered.¹⁹

And so, two years later, Brigadier General Montgomery C. Meigs, Quartermaster General of the Army, found himself walking the grounds of the Custis estate where General Robert E. Lee and his wife, Mary Randolph Custis, lived before Lee resigned from his Army commission to join the Confederacy.²⁰ For the last three years, Meigs had been responsible for ensuring that food and supplies were delivered to the Union soldiers, but now, as casualties from the many battlefields in and around Northern Virginia and Maryland began to flow into Washington, D.C., Meigs had to find a place for them to rest.²¹ The Federal government acquired the property at public auction, and by the time Lee surrendered in Appomattox a year later, over 12,000 soldiers

had been buried at the Arlington estate.²² Over the next six years, Meigs and the Quartermaster Corps undertook the enormous task of heading out to remote battlefields to locate and identify as many Union soldiers as possible and the rebury them at the Arlington estate. As Quartermaster Edmund Whitman observed, "Such a consecration of a nation's power and resources to a sentiment, the world has never witnessed."²³ By 1870, over 315,000 soldiers had been identified by name, rank, and unit, and had been reburied in what has come to be known as Arlington National Cemetery.²⁴

Today, over 400,000 service members and certain of their dependents are buried at Arlington National Cemetery.²⁵ My grandfather, U.S. Air Force Chief Warrant Officer 2 Elmer John Halas, and my grandmother, Dorothy Cain Halas are buried there.²⁶ Grandpa Halas served in Europe during World War II. My brother, Lance Corporal David Burton Houck (USMC) is also buried there.²⁷ David was killed in Iraq during the Battle of Fallujah. A few feet away are two of his brothers in arms, Corporal Nicholas Lee Ziolkowski²⁸ and Lance Corporal Dimitrios Gavriel,²⁹ both killed in action within a few days of David. All of them were escorted home by members of the Quartermaster Corps.

We are forever grateful to the servicemembers who brought my brother home. I suspect there are thousands of other families who have the same feeling. Whether serving on the front lines of battle, working out the logistics of some very long and dangerous supply chains, or carefully and respectfully bringing another hero home, for 247 years, the Quartermaster Corps has been making things better.

*We're the gang that keeps things moving,
At the front and post to post,
When a soldier has tough going
We're the guys he needs the most.
From the day he joins the Army
'Til the time he's home once more,
If he should have to shoot or ride
The buddies fighting by his side
Will be from the Quartermaster Corps.³⁰*

¹ This article is a continuation of the article "Logistics," which was published in the May 2022 issue of DICTA, regarding the important duties of the Army Quartermaster Corps. For a copy of the article, please visit the KBA website at www.knoxbar.org.

² See Weatherspark.com, Climate and Weather Year Round in Isolabella, Italy, <https://weatherspark.com/y/55480/Average-Weather-in-Isolabella-Italy-Year-Round>, last visited May 9, 2022.

³ Congressional Medal of Honor Society, *Stories of Sacrifice: Eric Gunnar Gibson*, <https://www.cmohs.org/recipients/eric-g-gibson>, last visited May 9, 2022.

⁴ Dr. Steven E. Anders, *Cook Under Fire*, Quartermaster Professional Bulletin (Spring 1998), available at <http://www.seabeecook.com/cooks/army/gibson.htm>.

⁵ *Id.*; see also U.S. Army, Quartermaster Corps, Quartermaster History, <https://quartermaster.army.mil/history/#:~:text=The%20Quartermaster%20Corps%20traces%20its,support%20to%20the%20new%20Army>, last visited May 9, 2022.

⁶ Congressional Medal of Honor Society, *supra* n. 3.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Find a Grave, Eric Gunnar Gibson, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7722443/eric-gunnar-gibson>, last visited May 9, 2022.

¹² U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps, Quartermaster History, <https://quartermaster.army.mil/history/>, last visited May 9, 2022.

¹³ American Battlefield Trust, Shiloh, Pittsburg Landing, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/civil-war/battles/shiloh>, last visited May 9, 2022.

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MONTHLY MEETING

Plan now to attend the Barristers monthly meeting on Wednesday, May 11, starting at 5:15 pm at outdoor patio at The Firefly at the Hilton, located at 501 W. Church Avenue, Knoxville. Social time starts at 5:00 pm. Register by clicking May 11 on the event calendar at www.knoxbar.org.

VETERANS LEGAL ADVICE CLINIC

The Veterans' Legal Advice Clinic is a joint project of the KBA/Barristers Access to Justice Committees, Legal Aid of East Tennessee, the Knox Co. Public Defender's Community Law Office, the UT College of Law, LMU- Duncan School of Law, and the local Veterans Affairs office. This is a general advice and referral clinic which requires attorney volunteers for its continued operation. The next Veterans Legal Clinic will be held in person at the Knoxville Community Law Office on May 11. Sign up at <https://www.knoxbar.org/?pg=Upcoming-Legal-Clinics>.

VOLUNTEER BREAKFAST COMMITTEE CONTINUES OPERATIONS

The Volunteer Breakfast is a recurring event on the 4th Thursday of each month at 6:15 a.m. at the Volunteer Ministry Center, located at 511 N. Broadway, Knoxville, Tennessee. The Barristers Volunteer Breakfast Committee always needs volunteers to serve food or sponsor. The cost is \$150 for sponsoring, and we need 4-5 volunteers. If you are unable to fund the breakfast, the Barristers will subsidize the cost of the breakfast. We meet at 6:15 a.m. and serve breakfast to approximately 30-40 individuals, generally leaving the site around 7:30 a.m. It's a great way to serve the community! Please contact either **Matt Knable** at (865) 360-5044 or **Laura Wyrick** at (865) 297-5511 with any questions and/or about volunteering.

- 14 American Battlefield Trust, Antietam, Sharpsburg, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/civil-war/battles/antietam>, last visited May 9, 2022.
- 15 American Battlefield Trust, Peninsula Campaign, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/peninsula-campaign-0>, last visited May 9, 2022.
- 16 Report of General Robert E. Lee, Peninsular Campaign, Seven Days' Battle, available at <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/robert-e-lee-report-seven-days-battles>.
- 17 Edward Steere, Early Growth of the National Cemetery System, *Quartermaster Review* (Mar.-Apr. 1951), available at <https://www.quartermasterfoundation.org/article/early-growth-of-the-national-cemetery-system/>.
- 18 Dr. Leo P. Hirrel, The Beginnings of the Quartermaster Graves Registration System, U.S. Army, https://www.army.mil/article/128693/the_beginnings_of_the_quartermaster_graves_registration_service, last visited May 9, 2022.
- 19 *Id.*
- 20 Steere, supra n. 17.
- 21 Camden Arciniega, Montgomery Meigs: Visionary & Patron of Arlington National Cemetery, <https://freetourbyfoot.com/montgomery-meigs-visionary-patron-arlington-national-cemetery/>, last visited May 10, 2022.
- 22 *Id.*
- 23 *Id.*
- 24 *Id.*
- 25 Arlington National Cemetery, History of Arlington National Cemetery, <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/History-of-Arlington-National-Cemetery#:~:text=Today%2C%20approximately%20400%2C000%20veterans%20and,the%20grounds%20of%20the%20cemetery>.
- 26 See Section 6, Grave 9572-NS.
- 27 See Section 60, Grave 8083, <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/dbhouck.htm>.
- 28 See Section 60, Grave 8076.
- 29 See Section 60, Grave 8079.
- 30 The Quartermaster Song, available at https://quartermaster.army.mil/history/qm_song.html.

UPDATE YOUR DIRECTORY LISTING BY JUNE 3!



- 1 Visit www.knoxbar.org/directoryupdate to update your individual listing for the 2022/2023 Attorneys' Directory.
- 2 **Have you considered a Firm Listing to promote your firm's practice areas?** Be found by colleagues and potential clients in local lawyer searches by adding a firm listing! Whether you are a sole practitioner or a large multi-office firm, it's an effective and affordable way to let others know about your practice. In addition to a print listing, make sure your law firm is listed at www.knoxbar.org. Special discounts for firms with 1-5 lawyers. New enhanced attorney profile available for those with a Premium online firm listing.
- 3 **The Areas of Practice section** provides you with a quick reference section to list your areas of expertise so that you can be found by those looking for someone with your special knowledge. Make certain that the three "areas of practice" designations you've chosen accurately reflect your practice in 2022/2023.
- 4 **Enter the Knoxville Bar Association's photo contest** for the cover of the 2022 KBA Attorneys' Directory!

The printed Attorneys' Directory will be available to members in August, but now is a great time to make sure your law firm and personal contact information is up-to-date.

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