Press Release

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Repatriation ceremony brings WWII, 31st Infantry Regiment Soldier home to rest

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team’s 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division (LI), honored one of their own Oct. 23 during the repatriation ceremony for Sgt. Lawrence Hanscom in Augusta, Maine.

Hanscom served as a rifleman, driver and squad leader with E Company, 2nd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, during World War II. After fighting on the Bataan Peninsula, he was captured by the Japanese and survived the Bataan Death March.

Hanscom is believed to have died from illness in Cabanatuan Prison, and he was buried in a mass grave with nine other Americans. Nearly 77 years later, DNA testing positively identified his remains, which were returned to his hometown for the burial service attended by family, friends and invited guests.

The command team and honor guard from 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) participated in the ceremony at Maine Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

“When I think back on what must have been going on here in Augusta during the war, I imagine that his family knew something was amiss as the war in the Pacific wore on,” said Lt. Col. Steve Wallace, 4-31 Infantry commander, during the ceremony. “The letters stopped, and the bad news from the Philippines dominated the headlines. I know when his memorial headstone was dedicated in the 1950s that some closure was achieved. But the Army never forgot. We kept looking, and now Sgt. Hanscom is home.”

Wallace and Command Sgt. Maj. Gavin Holmes, 4-31 Infantry senior enlisted adviser, presented Dave Erickson, Hanscom’s nephew, with his awards – the Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart – following the service. Holmes also placed a regimental unit coin in the casket before it was sealed.

Hanscom’s niece, Lisa Erickson, said it was difficult to express how honored their family was to have members of 4-31 Infantry travel from Fort Drum for the ceremony. She said it was especially poignant for the command team to present their uncle’s service medals to his nephew.

“We were grateful for the history of the 31st Infantry Regiment that Lt. Col Wallace and Command Sgt. Maj. Holmes were able to share with us,” she said. “The dignity, care, respect and honor these gentlemen showed our family and, more importantly, a Soldier who was lost 77 years ago, definitely demonstrates that they do not forget and they always take care of their own.”

Caption: Members of 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) participate in the repatriation ceremony for Sgt. Lawrence Hanscom on Oct. 23 at Maine Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Augusta, Maine. Hanscom was assigned to E Company, 2nd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, during World War II and died in a prisoner of war camp. He was buried in a mass grave overseas and, nearly 77 years later, DNA testing confirmed his identity and he was brought home. (Photo courtesy of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division)

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