

Bones of two Japanese soldiers cremated, remains of American soldier identified

By Raquel C. Bagnol

raquel.bagnol@mvariety.com

Variety News Staff

THE Kuentai Group, a Japanese nonprofit organization that has been conducting missions to recover the remains of Japanese soldiers who perished in World War II, has cremated the bones of two Japanese soldiers at the old airport in Marpi yesterday.

In an interview, physical anthropologist Shuichiro Narasaki from the Japan Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in Tokyo said the group of Japanese volunteers and members of the CNMI Historic Preservation Office recovered Japanese remains at the burial site in Tanapag and on private property in Gualo Rai.

"We received a report from Betty H. Johnson in Gualo Rai about the bones they found and we set out to recover them. Our findings show that they belonged to a Japanese soldier based on the artifacts and the dog tag," Narasaki said.

He said the ashes of the two Japanese soldiers will be flown to Japan today.

Two other sets of bones were recovered at the Tanapag burial site, Narasaki said.

"We have identified the bones to belong to one William T. Carneal



Physical anthropologist Shuichiro Narasaki of the Japan Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare inspects the ashes from the two sets of bones cremated at the old airport in Marpi.

Photo by Raquel C. Bagnol

based on the information on the U.S. military dog tag found along with the bones as well as a high school ring and American coins. Carneal must have been around 18 or 19 when he was buried at the site over 68 years ago," Narasaki said.

Carneal's dog tag also referred to relatives from Kentucky as his immediate contact.

Narasaki said they recovered another set of bones that they believe belonged to an American soldier but the bones had yet to be

identified.

Narasaki said the team of Dr. Paul D. Emanovsky of the Central Identification Laboratory of the Hawaii-based U.S. Joint Prisoners of War/Missing in Action Accounting Command, or JPAC, took the

bones of Carneal and the other set of bones possibly belonging to another American soldier for identification.

Narasaki said it could take months before the findings can be verified but if the bones happen to belong to a Japanese soldier, JPAC will return them to the Japanese government.

JPAC's mission is to search and possibly account for the more than 83,000 Americans that remain classified as missing from the wars in the Pacific.

Narasaki said an estimated 55,300 Japanese soldiers died in the NMI during the war. Of this number, the remains of 29,174 have been recovered since 1952, which means over 20,000 are still out there.

The recovery team arrived here from Japan on March 19 and will leave today.

Narasaki said he will turn over his recovery reports and findings to the Japanese government.

Usan Kurata of the Kuentai Group said the ashes will be brought to the Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery in Tokyo today.

In Sep. 2011, the Kuentai Group cremated the bones of 575 Japanese soldiers at the old airport in Marpi. In September last year, they recovered and cremated 135 sets of bones and another 28 sets of Japanese remains in December last year.