



THE US PACIFIC DISHONOURED PLOT

By Colonel Charles A. Jones, US Marine Corps Reserve (Retd)

After the war, the US Quartermaster General of the Army inquired of the American Battle Monuments Commission if they had space suitable in one of their cemeteries to inter the 96 American servicemen who had been executed for capital (i.e. death penalty) offences in the European, North African and Mediterranean Theaters of Operations. In 1949 retired General of the Army George C. Marshall, the wartime Army Chief-of-Staff, was now the Commission's Chairman and he was anxious that such burials must ensure that 'no stigma, either actual, imagined, or implied, could become attached to the soldiers buried nearby who had died honourably in battle'. The burial site must also be hidden from public view.

Thus, a separate walled area was selected outside the Oise-Aisne Cemetery near Fère-en-Tardenois in France (one of the US cemeteries for Americans killed in the First World War) for the executed dead to be buried in a 'dishonoured' plot in graves identified only

by a number. All requests to visit the area are refused. (See *After the Battle* No. 32.)

The other half of the problem was where to bury American servicemen executed in the Pacific and China-India-Burma Theaters of Operations during or after the war. One of the sites chosen was Schofield Barracks on the island of Oahu in the Hawaiian Islands. (The other was Clark Air Force Base on Luzon.)

Schofield Barracks was named after Major General John M. Schofield, the commander of the US Army's Pacific Division, who visited the Hawaiian Islands in 1872. After the United States annexed Hawaii in 1898, the Army established a barracks on the island of Oahu between Wahiawa and Kunia in 1909. A Post Stockade was added in 1918 although it did not become operational until 1921. During the Second World War it held up to 450 prisoners. (See *After the Battle* No. 38.)

The Post Cemetery, unlike America's National Cemeteries, was designed solely for the interment of active and retired military members and their dependants, not war dead. Thus many of the Second World War burials at Schofield were subsequently transferred to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl in Honolulu, also on Oahu, but the Schofield cemetery still includes the graves of 19 unidentified remains and four Italian prisoners of war. Hidden from view from the front of the cemetery behind a separate L-shaped hedge, and buried facing away from the US flag, are the remains of seven soldiers executed for capital crimes in the Pacific and China-India-Burma Theaters. Unlike the dishonoured servicemen buried in Europe, all those at Schofield have headstones inscribed with their names and dates of death.



US servicemen executed in the Pacific Theater for capital crimes are buried on the island of Oahu at Schofield Barracks (above) and

in the Philippines. While access to the European dishonoured plot is denied, Schofield's is accessible after gaining access to the post.



Above: At 6.45 a.m. on Sunday, May 3, 1942, Harold Gibson, who lived in Victoria Court off Victoria Avenue in Melbourne, was crossing the road on his way to work in the Bleak House Hotel when he spotted the body of a woman lying in the doorway between two shops which were part of the hotel building. At first he thought she was asleep but when she did not respond to his touch, he lit a match and realised she was dead. All her clothing had been torn off except for the belt of her dress. The doctor determined that she had been dead for three or four hours and detectives of the homicide squad identified her as 40-year-old Mrs Ivy McLeod (below). The post mortem established that she had died due to paralysis of the heart due to pressure on the nerves in her neck. Robbery as a motive was discounted as her handbag was present containing money. Right: The Bleak House Hotel on the corner of Beaconsfield Parade changed its name to The Beach House in 1998 but is now just known as The Beach.



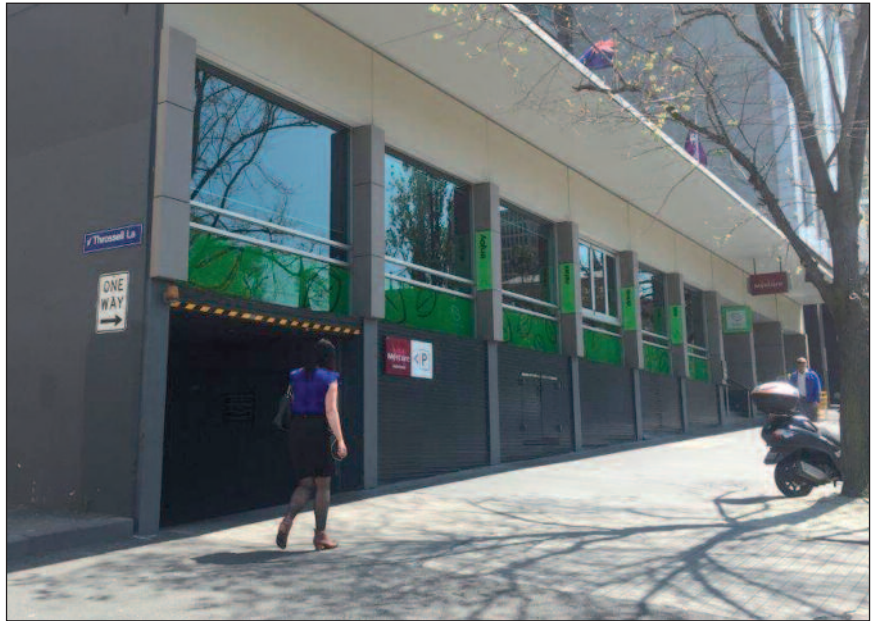
Edward J. Leonski, a 24-year-old private in the US 52nd Signal Battalion, murdered three women in Melbourne, Australia. A resident of New York City, he was inducted into the Army in February 1941 and arrived in Melbourne on February 2, 1942. Three

months later, on the morning of May 3, Ivy McLeod was found dead in the doorway of a hotel in the Albert Park suburb having been beaten and strangled. Robbery was not assumed to be the motive as her handbag still contained money.





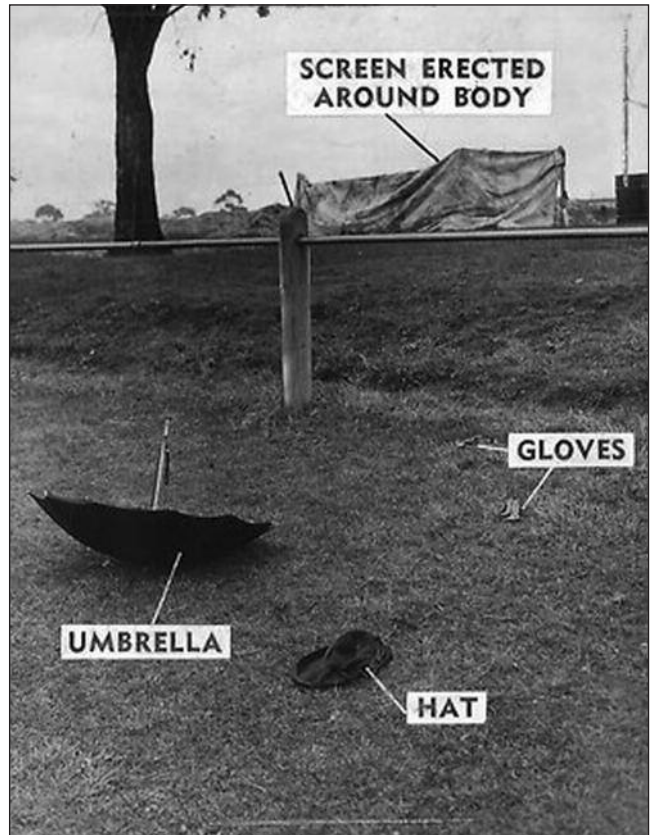
Six days later, Pauline Thompson was found strangled in East Melbourne after a night out. Witnesses who last saw her stated that she was in the company of a young man with an American accent. With several other women having survived recent attacks, by now the Press had dubbed the killer the 'Brown-Out Strangler' after the low-light regulations in force in the city which were less stringent than a proper black-out. Even so, the regulations had resulted in four pedestrian deaths the previous week.



On May 9, the partly clothed body of another woman was found on the steps of Morningside House, a block of apartments at 13 Spring Street. She was identified as Mrs Pauline Thompson living at that address. Detectives believed that the two murders were probably committed by the same person and began an intensive hunt for the murderer. Victorian police even superimposed a photograph of Pauline on a mannequin dressed in her black coat and hat (left) in the hope that a witness might come forward. Right: The body was discovered here — now the entrance to a hotel car park — by Henry McGowan, a night watchman. He first found a handbag a quarter of a mile away and an hour later he saw the body. He told detectives that he had not seen it an hour earlier when doing his rounds. She was lying on her back partly up the stone steps. Her clothing had been pulled down from her shoulders and up from her legs forming a bundle around her waist. Her top coat was ruffled up under her legs.



On May 18 Gladys Hosking was attacked while walking home from Melbourne University, but this time a witness was able to describe a dishevelled American serviceman who approached her asking for directions. Hosking's body was found in Royal Park where the Americans had established Camp Pell.



Then, a week later, the body of a third girl, Gladys Hosking, was found just inside Royal Park. Early on the morning of May 18, a butcher found signs of a struggle on the grassy footpath outside the south-eastern entrance on Gatehouse Street. Entering the park, which was now the location of the US Army Camp Pell, he spotted a body lying face down in the mud. Calling to two American soldiers walking near the camp, they ran over to where a number of utilities trenches were being dug. The woman's clothing had been torn from her shoulders and pulled up exposing her legs.



The Press were soon on the scene to picture the spot, detectives having already shielded the body from view with tarpaulins. The body was splattered with mud which indicated that a violent struggle had taken place.



The services cabinet has gone but Gail Ramsey, who traced all the murder sites in Melbourne, found its position still marked by access covers. A bicycle path has now been added where the body lay.



By now it was very evident that all three murders had been committed by the same person and an Australian soldier came forward to tell police that he saw an American serviceman slipping under the Royal Park fence on the night of the murder. The soldier shone a torch on his face and asked him why he was covered head to foot in mud. The soldier replied: 'I fell over in a pool of mud going across the park'. Detectives now began interviews with all the 15,000 American soldiers in Camp Pell (above) and after some days arrested Edward Leonski when yellow mud matching the crime scene was found in his tent. It also came out later that Leonski had boasted about the second murder to another soldier who had failed to notify the police. After the Americans departed, the wartime huts of Camp Pell were used for emergency housing, but became a crime-ridden location before being razed to the ground. Right: Back in 1860, 15,000 townspeople gathered in Royal park to bid farewell to Robert Burke and William Wills who were leading the Victorian Exploring Expedition — a 2,000-mile journey north through uncharted territory. Both men failed to return and in 1890 this cairn was erected in the park in their memory.





Leonski was held in the city watchhouse, part of the Melbourne Magistrates' Courthouse on the corner of La Trobe Street and Russell Street. In 1997 it became part of the RMIT University

and Gail was thrilled to find this corner of the old exercise yard unchanged. Here, in these unofficial snapshots, he seems quite pleased to bask in his notoriety.



Now there was a political controversy as the Australian government had to decide whether to prosecute Leonski under Victorian State laws or hand him over to the American authorities. In any event, the National Security Regulations were amended so that any US servicemen committing a crime in Australia could be tried by the Americans. Consequently, Leonski faced a court-martial which was held in the US Military Police headquarters. *Right:* Gail found the building further along Russell Street at No. 390. Although now converted into apartments, the exterior is unchanged.

Private Leonski was picked out in an identity parade, arrested and charged with the murders. He was tried under American military law and was convicted and sentenced to death at a general court-martial on July 17, 1942. General Douglas MacArthur confirmed the sentence on November 4, and five days later Leonski was hanged at Pentridge Prison in the Melbourne suburb of Coburg. In the military, death by firing-squad is considered honourable; death by hanging is considered dishonourable. He was first buried in the local Springvale Cemetery, but was exhumed in May 1945 and moved to the US Military Cemetery at Ipswich, near Brisbane in Queensland.





Leonski was found guilty on July 17, 1942. General Douglas MacArthur, the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Theater, personally signed the execution order on November 4 after the case had been confirmed and reviewed. Leonski was transferred to the Metropolitan Gaol (above) in the northern suburb of Coburg for execution which took place early on November 9. (The name of the hangman has never been made public.) Leonski was first buried in Melbourne's Springvale Cemetery, being exhumed and re-interred in the main US



cemetery in Australia at Ipswich in May 1945. Then, in 1949, he remains together with four other executed American servicemen (Private Herman Perry, Private Louis Garbus, Private Robert Pearson and Private Garlon Mickles) were reburied in a formal dishonoured plot which had been established in Schofield Barracks together with Private Cornelius Thomas and PFC Jessie Boston, both of whom were executed in Hawaii in 1945. Right: Leonski's headstone as it appeared at his grave in the Schofield Barracks post cemetery in 2015.

Private Herman Perry, born near Monroe, North Carolina, on May 16, 1922, was serving in the US 849th Engineer Aviation Battalion in the China-Burma-India Theater. His unit was one of those deployed on constructing the Ledo Road, the Allied supply route between India and China later re-named the Stillwell Road. On March 3, 1944, when his battalion was stationed near the Burmese village of Tagap Ga, Perry's commanding officer, Lieutenant Harold H. Cady, attempted to apprehend the soldier for dereliction of duty and place him in the area's military prison. Perry had already spent time in this stockade and was well aware of the abuses that took place there. When Perry was found, he was holding an M1 rifle and repeatedly warned Cady not to approach him. When the lieutenant continued his advance, Perry shot and killed him.

Perry fled into the wilderness and lived out a fugitive's life of jungle survival, discovering and adapting to the head-hunting lifestyle of the Naga people of north-eastern India and northern Burma. The tribe chief was so impressed by Perry that he even offered him

his 14-year-old daughter in marriage. The pair was wed and soon conceived a child. Perry was first caught on July 20 — over four months after his crime — by a posse sent out by the 502nd Military Police Battalion to the Naga village of Tgum Ga, and was wounded by a bullet through the chest during his arrest.

Brought back to Ledo and having recovered in the 20th General Hospital, he received his death sentence from a military court on September 4. However, on the night of December 15/16, while his verdict was still being reviewed, he escaped from Ledo Stockade and fled back into the jungle, attempting to rejoin his adopted Naga tribe and his expectant wife.

Now the subject of what was probably the largest manhunt carried out by the US Army during the war, with teams from the 159th MP Battalion hot on his trail, he eluded capture several times but was finally caught again near the town of Namrup in India on March 9, 1945. He was taken back to the 159th's stockade at Chabua and executed on the gallows at the Ledo Stockade on March 15. He was initially buried at the US Army cemetery at the nearby town of Margherita.

Private Louis E. Garbus, a 26-year-old soldier from Nassau, New York, who had enlisted in May 1942, was found guilty of the rape of a ten-year-old Brisbane school-girl. Sentenced to death by court-martial, he was scheduled to be executed in a Brisbane gas chamber on March 5, 1943. Instead, he killed himself earlier that day by taking cyanide in his cell. (This explains why he is usually not to be found in the list of US servicemen executed by the Army.) He was initially buried in the American Military Cemetery at nearby Ipswich, the same cemetery where Edward Leonski was later interred.

Private Cornelius Thomas was a 23-year-old soldier from Harris County, Texas, who had enlisted in September 1942. Stationed in Hawaii, on June 11, 1944, he shot a resident of the island of Maui, Francis T. Silva, the victim, from the town of Kahului, succumbed to his wound the following day. Thomas was apprehended after one of the largest manhunts in the island's history, court-martialled on August 7, 1944, and sentenced to death.



Mugshot of Private Herman Perry. He was being held for killing his commanding officer but escaped twice before being executed.



These are the other five headstones in the Schofield dishonoured plot in addition to that of Private Leonski.

Private First Class Jessie D. Boston was a 35-year-old soldier from Detroit, Michigan, inducted in March 1943 and serving in the 645th Ordnance Ammunition Company in Hawaii. On February 15, 1945, he robbed and murdered a housewife, Mrs Shizue Saito from the town of Wailuku on Maui, smashing her head with a rock. He too received a death sentence in April 1945.

Held in the Schofield Barracks stockade, Thomas and Boston were both executed on the same day, August 1, 1945. Although reports often state that both men were shot by firing-squad, they were in fact executed in the manner ordered by their courts-martial: Thomas was hanged and Boston faced death by musketry, both executions taking place at Execution Gulch, a deep wilderness of rocks and jagged vegetation directly south of the post stockade. Boston died first, with Thomas following shortly thereafter. However, Thomas's hanging was botched due to the hinges on the recently-erected gallows not allowing the trapdoor to fully open. When the trap was sprung, Thomas bounced off the protruding edge. Although the fall broke his neck, it did not kill him outright and he was not pronounced dead until 11 minutes after the trapdoor had dropped. Both men were buried in Plot 9 (at that time known as Plot 3) of the post cemetery on August 11.

Private Robert A. Pearson was a soldier from McDowell County, West Virginia, born in 1915 who enlisted in February 1941. No details are known of the crime for which he

received the death penalty but he was hanged on Guadalcanal on March 20, 1945. (It seems almost too much of a coincidence but another Robert Pearson was hanged in the US Military Prison at Shepton Mallet in the UK on March 17 — three days before his namesake was hanged in the Pacific. The one in the UK was Corporal Robert L. Pearson of the 1698th Engineer Combat Battalion, sentenced to death, together with Private Cubia Jones, for raping Mrs Joyce Brown in Chard, Somerset, on December 3, 1944 — see *After the Battle* No. 59, page 49.)

Private Garlon Mickles, a 23-year-old soldier from Saint Louis, Missouri, serving in the 2280th Quartermaster Truck Company, was sentenced to death for brutally raping Frances Gitnick, a civilian employee of the United Seamen's Service, in her quarters in the Nurses' Area, Air Transport Command, at Harmon Field on Guam on April 2, 1946.

Detained at Schofield Barracks, he escaped from the stockade and was later found under a drainage ditch on Vineyard Boulevard, carrying a bundle of women's clothing. He was hanged on April 22, 1947, and buried at the post cemetery two days later. The only serviceman in Plot 9 to die after the Second World War, he was also the last person, military or civilian, to be executed in Hawaii. In 1957, ten years after he was put to death, the Territory of Hawaii abolished capital punishment.

In April 1947 — the same month Mickles was executed — it was decided that all

American servicemen buried in Australia would be relocated to the United States, so the remains of Leonski and Garbus were exhumed from Ipswich and repatriated to Oahu. The same happened with the remains of Perry in India and Pearson on Guadalcanal. All four were re-interred in the Schofield Post Cemetery on April 14, 1949. Thus the number of men buried in the dishonoured plot reached seven. The graves were arranged in two rows with the names and dates of death engraved on the stones facing the cemetery's rear fence. The first row of graves was closest to the rear of the cemetery: Garbus, Mickles, Thomas and Boston (left to right). In front of these graves and closest to the front of the cemetery in a second row were those of Perry, Pearson and Leonski (left to right).

I first visited the Post Cemetery in 1999 when serving on Oahu as a Reservist in the US Marine Corps and saw seven tombstones in the dishonoured plot, but during a visit in 2015 I noticed that the headstone for Herman Perry had been removed. My research revealed that his remains were exhumed in 2007 and cremated after his family won a prolonged battle with the Army to obtain permission for the exhumation. His ashes were buried near family members in a cemetery in Washington, DC. (Perry is the subject of the book *Now the Hell Will Start. One Soldier's Flight from the Greatest Manhunt of World War II* by Brendan I. Koerner, published in 2008.)



Private Perry was later exhumed and cremated. His empty grave is to the left of Pearson in the rear row.

JOY HAYMAR



Back in 1900, at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, the United States acquired Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. Military bases were established throughout the islands with the largest Army base, Fort William McKinley, set up in Manila, named after the US President assassinated in 1901. Over the following years a large post cemetery built up which, during World War II, was the scene of heavy fighting with thousands of graves being lost or damaged. When in 1946 the US and Philippine governments chose this site for a permanent cemetery managed by the American Battle Monuments Commission, to accommodate the 17,000 dead from operations in New Guinea and the Philippines, the thousands of non-WWII burials had to be moved. From January to May in 1948, the graves were opened and the disinterred remains transferred to the post cemetery at Fort Stotsenburg which was renamed Clark Air Force Base when transferred from the US Army in 1949. Burials from three other cemeteries were also moved to the new cemetery, located just inside the main gate, which was named Clark Veterans' Cemetery. The work of moving 5,056

graves, 2,100 of which were unidentified due to the Stotsenburg cemetery records being lost, was completed by December 1950. This included 20 American soldiers who had been executed for capital crimes: Henry Baker, hanged in Leyte on March 18, 1945; Arthur Brown, together with Andrew Gibson, Leroy Greene, Charles Horn, Eugene Washington and Lloyd White all hanged at Oro Bay, New Guinea, on October 12, 1944; Clarence Cheatham, who died in prison on September 4, 1945 before being executed at Leyte; Harold Crabtree, shot by firing squad at Luzon on July 31, 1945; William Curry, hanged on April 20, 1945 at Oro Bay; Avelino Fernandez, hanged at Oro Bay on November 20, 1944; Ernest Harris, hanged at Luzon on August 9, 1945; Samuel Hawthorne, hanged on January 29, 1945 at Oro Bay; Dan Lee by firing squad at Luzon on November 9, 1945; Ozell Louis, hanged at Luzon on October 15, 1945; Ellis McCloud, hanged on August 20, 1945 at Luzon; Harvey Nichols, hanged at Luzon on August 23, 1945; James Peoples, hanged at Oro Bay on September 2, 1944; James Thomas, hanged at Luzon on September 25, 1945, and Albert Williams, hanged at Luzon on August 26, 1945.

Besides the Oise-Aisne Cemetery, Schofield Barracks and Clark Air Force Base (today Clark Freeport Zone, where 20 executed soldiers from the Second World War are buried in Clark Veterans Cemetery), a total of 25 executed soldiers rest in various post cemeteries within the United States. Including Perry, there are seven executed soldiers buried in various private cemeteries within the US.

Over the following years Clark Veterans Cemetery became neglected, the eruption of nearby Mount Pinatubo in 1991 depositing several inches of volcanic ash. The same year the US Air Force left the Philippines. Three years passed before a group of volunteers from the local association of the Veterans of Foreign Wars began work to restore the cemetery, a new pair of gates being donated by local businesses in 2011. Then, in January 2013, the United States government stepped in with a grant of \$5 million, placing the cemetery under the care of the American Battle Monuments Commission. It remains open for the burial of American veterans and Philippine Scouts.



The majority of the executed dead lie in Plot D of Clark Veterans Cemetery.