



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) SHEET

Q. What is the Clark Veterans Cemetery?

A. The Clark Veterans Cemetery, previously called the Clark American or Military Cemetery, is an American military cemetery on the old U.S. Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. It was established in 1948 following WW II to receive the remains of four earlier American military cemeteries that were being closed at the end of World War Two. Two of these cemeteries were located nearby at old Fort Stotsenburg, an Army Post that dated back to 1902, one was at the U.S. Navy base at Sangley Point on the Bay of Manila, and the largest was at Fort William McKinley in Manila, another Army post that dates back to 1901. The property of Fort Stotsenburg with its adjoining Clark Army Air Field later became the Clark Air Force Base in 1949 and Fort McKinley became the site for the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial dedicated in 1960 to honor and handle the remains of World War Two dead from the Philippines and throughout Southeast Asia.

Q. What do you want done with the cemetery?

A. When the USAF left Clark AFB in 1991 following the devastating impact of the volcanic eruption of Mount Pinatubo and the rejection by the Philippines of any future U.S. presence in the Philippines, there was no U.S. Government (USG) provision made for the long term care of this American military cemetery. Stories differ over what happened and who should have done what, but the outcome was the same. The cemetery was left unattended, wrought iron fencing and other valuable property looted, the grounds and headstones were covered with ash, and what had been hallowed ground was left desolate, deserted and encroached with heavy vegetation. Contrary to the warriors creed to "leave no one behind", the US Government has abandoned and left behind thousands of veterans. We want the United States Government to reassume its rightful and obligatory responsibility to maintain the cemetery.

Q. How many are buried at the Clark Veterans Cemetery?

A. Records exist for almost 8,600. Because the cemetery was established by moving the remains of four other American military cemeteries, at a time when the Philippines and the American bases had been devastated by WW II, much of the history and records are lost. More than two thousand are listed as "unknowns" including four group burials of unknowns, most believed to have been veterans based on the Monument to Unknown Dead that was erected and dedicated in 1908 solely to the "Unknown Dead Soldiers, Sailors and Marines of the United States".

**"Let No Vet
Be Forgotten"**



Q. Who are buried at Clark?

A. The burials consist primarily of American veterans back to the Spanish American War and their dependents, civilians who worked in military billets for the U.S. Armed Forces, such as Quartermasters, Trumpeters, Ordnancemen, Mariners and related military duties and entitled to interment or inurnment in a U.S. cemetery. There also are some civilians who were trapped in the Philippines during WW II, and others authorized by the U.S. Government. Over 5,000 remains were relocated from the former Army cemetery at Fort McKinley to make room for the new WWII American Military and Memorial in Manila. Because American civilians employed by the U.S. military from the time of annexation of the Philippines in 1898 from the Spanish were predominately veterans, many decided to remain in the Philippines in a civilian capacity. It is believed that a large number of individuals indexed as civilians were in fact veterans such as Private Henry A. Wigley. It is estimated that over half of those buried are American military veterans with the next largest group being their dependents.

Q. Is there a large number of civilians buried in the cemetery?

A. At one time that was the perception. We have found several veterans who were classified as civilians when they should have been more accurately classified as veterans or were in serving in positions of direct support of the military and war efforts. For example Private Henry A. Wigley served three years in the Army as a nurse in the Philippines during the Spanish American War and was assigned to the hospital at Fort McKinley, Manila. He was separated in 1901 at the end of his three year enlistment and continued to work as a health care provider treating the local population in the Philippines until the time of his death in 1916. Another example is Christian Oleson, a Teamster in the Army Quartermaster Department who died May 1, 1901 after supporting the Spanish American War and Philippine Insurrection. He is but one of literally hundreds of Teamsters, Ferriers, Blacksmiths, Wheelwrights and Packers who served in the Army Quartermaster Department in the early 1900s and buried at Clark. In today's modern military organization, these duties would now be performed by soldiers. The cemetery is comprised predominantly of American veterans.

Q. How about American dependents?

A. There are military dependents buried in the cemetery, however dependents of military are authorized for burial in U.S. military cemeteries. Further, both Fort McKinley and Clark AFB hosted large hospitals. Both hospitals treated the military and their families, many of whom died of complications. A way to illustrate that is the interments of 50 sets of twins, 16 of which occurred after the USAF assumed responsibility, these sets of twins are all dependents of military that were stationed in the Philippines at the time of their children's deaths due to complications during childbirth. There are many other records of dependents dying and being buried at Clark while their active duty sponsor was later reassigned to another post.



Q. Are there Filipinos buried at Clark?

A. Yes There are almost 650 Filipino Scouts alone buried at Clark dating back to the first recorded burial in the cemetery - - Private Santiago Belona, USA who died January 13, 1900. There are also another 500 buried in the American Cemetery and Memorial in Manila. Filipino Scouts served with distinction on active duty in the U.S. Army and have a proud and historic tradition. In WWII the first three U.S. Army Medals of Honor were awarded to Filipino Scouts for heroism displayed during the battle of Bataan. There were many other Filipinos who served on active duty in the Armed Forces under special programs that allowed Philippine nationals to serve in the US military. For many years through the mid 1980s, the U.S. Navy quota for Filipino recruits was 2,000 per year. It stands to reason that there would be many Filipino military who served in the U.S. Armed Forces and their dependents buried at Clark.

Q. Is there a monument to unknown soldiers in the cemetery?

A. Yes. The historic monument dates back to 1908. The marble is from the state of Vermont and originally erected in the old Fort McKinley military cemetery by the Ladies Memorial Association of Manila in remembrance of America's Unknown Dead. This monument remained in the Fort McKinley cemetery and was damaged with bullet and shrapnel pockmarks during the heavy fighting that took place on the site to liberate Manila. It was relocated to Clark along with 5,000 graves in May 1948 to make room for the new WWII American Cemetery and Memorial in Manila. The historical significance of this monument goes even deeper. The monument was engraved and installed in 1908 by Francisco Rodoreda, a Spaniard who had a marble shop on Calle Carriedo in Manila which survived the civil and social turmoil of the Spanish American War and transition from Spanish to American control of the islands. This same shop and merchant are referred to and quoted by name in Jose Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere". Jose Rizal is perhaps the Philippines most renowned and respected national hero and his book, "the Noli" is perhaps the most famous book in the country.

Q. Can the cemetery be considered a community cemetery?

A. No, absolutely not! The historic record is clear, the Clark Veterans Cemetery was originally established as a U.S. military cemetery and the four cemeteries from which remains were moved to create the Clark cemetery were also all U.S. military post cemeteries where only those authorized by the American government could be buried. The cemetery has a continuous and unbroken lineage of being exclusively U.S. military cemeteries whose origin date back to the 19th century. The cemetery was created by America and controlled by America for the repose of American dead with the expectation of perpetual care. Further attesting to this is a Monument in the Clark cemetery that was dedicated on July 4, 1984 by the Commander of the 13th US Air Force which emphatically states "it is the last active USAF cemetery outside the United States". All burials for over a century have been solely under U.S. military authority and rules and never has it been open to the public. There have been 375 burials since the USAF departed in November 1991, but each and every one has been an authorized US Military Veteran. At no time has the cemetery ever been a private, public or community cemetery.



Q. Are there people from other countries buried there?

A. There are a small number of isolated examples where the USG authorized burials because it was in the best interest of the government and the deaths occurred on the military installation. For example, among the 30,082 Vietnamese boat people/refugees that the US government repatriated in 1975 there were nine that died while in American care and waiting relocation in the Clark refugee camp and processing center. There is one French Navy Commander interred in 1905 and one Royal Canadian Navy Third Class Petty Officer of Chinese decent buried in 1956 where the reason for burials are unknown. The cemetery, and its four predecessors, was originally established as a US Military Cemetery and has been maintained for over nine decades as an American cemetery, and to this day is exclusively an American Military Cemetery. The VFW Post 2485 has continued to protect the heritage of Clark and its rich military legacy to this day.

Q. What do you want the U.S. Government to do?

A. The United States has military and veterans cemeteries in the US and all over the world. Until the USAF left the Philippines, this was one of them. It still is, but no U.S. government agency assumed responsibility when the bases were closed. Military cemeteries in the US are administered by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) if a VA cemetery, and the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) administers those outside the US. In our view, who maintains Clark is not as important as the US Government reassuming its rightful and obligatory responsibility. Informally, we have suggested the American Battle Monuments Commission taking charge, a logical recommendation considering that they already have two sites in the Philippines and have the requisite experience and infrastructure.

Q. You said “we”. Who are you and what do you represent?

A. We are a group of veterans, former government officials, businesses and organizations, and other individuals who care about veterans and who have formed the Clark Veterans Cemetery Restoration Association (CVCRA). It is a private non-profit corporation of the state of Oklahoma established for the sole purpose of bringing attention to this forgotten and abandoned American military cemetery while advocating the USG to again assume responsibility for it. You will find names and organizations who support this cause on our web site, www.CVCRA.org.

Q. It is understood that the U.S. Navy some years ago rejected the idea that our government should care for this cemetery.

A. A group of veterans brought up the subject of care of the cemetery to the Navy’s Year 2000 Meeting of its Retiree Council and requested that the Navy lead an effort with the State Department, Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration or the ABMC to take action. The response was “do not concur”, regrettably caused in large measure by a erroneous information and a misunderstanding that “Clark AFB cemetery is open to burial for Filipino civilians and military, Japanese civilians and military”. This is not and was not accurate. The balance



of the response used phrases such as a “lack of compelling case”, “support for a request....is unlikely”, etc. It is opined that the Navy, instead of non-concurring with its veterans request out of hand, should have referred the matter to other more appropriate authorities. These could have been the National Cemetery Administration of the Veterans Administration, the American Battle Monuments Commission, or even the U.S. Air Force whose original lack of provision for the cemetery’s future is a cause of the current dilemma. A case can be made that the USAF should have passed stewardship to the ABMC or other government agency two decades ago. A unilateral rejection of interest by the Navy of a plea from its own veterans is not understood since the matter falls more likely under the jurisdiction of others.

Q. What is the condition of the cemetery and is anyone caring for it now?

A. In 1994 the local post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) stepped forward to clean up and restore the cemetery. The Clark area along with the former U.S. Navy Facility in Subic has enjoyed an economic renaissance since base closure and several American firms have a presence in the area. The Rotary, American Legion and the VFW are all active supporting the cemetery. VFW Post 2485 has a memorandum of agreement that dates to 1994 with the Clark Development Corporation, the Philippine government entity responsible for the Clark area, allowing the VFW to administer and maintain the cemetery. Since the cemetery has remained an exclusive American military cemetery the VFW Post has facilitated, administered and authorized only American Veterans and Philippine Scouts who served in the US Army to be buried since their assumption of management in 1994. A valid DD-214 and death certificate are required. Our VA provides the headstone and burial flag and U.S. military honors are rendered by the VFW. The VFW Post conducts fund raisers and has retained a modest maintenance staff. Two American small businesses have stepped forward, one to rebuild the perimeter fence and an attractive entrance gate, parking lot and provides 24x7 security and the other to restore the 1908 Monument to Unknown Dead that was damaged in the fighting on Fort McKinley in 1945 and later moved to Clark Air Force Base in 1948.

Q. If the USG assumed responsibility, what would it cost to maintain the cemetery?

A. Given that labor rates are very modest in the Philippines, the VFW estimates an annual budget of \$200,000 would sustain the cemetery. Over time there could be capital costs given that a new American steward would no doubt want to bring the cemetery up to its standards. For troubled veterans observing the publicity associated with the managerial and fiscal deficiencies of our country’s flagship military cemetery, Arlington National Cemetery, the cost to maintain Clark pales in comparison to its alleged cost of malfeasance.

Q. Since the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) has a congressional charter to maintain American military cemeteries and monuments outside the U.S., has it been formerly approached to take over the cemetery?

A. Not by the CVCRA. There has been informal discussions which have led us to believe that ABMC might assume responsibility if authorized by its chartering authority, the U.S. Congress. A view of our web site will reveal an effort to gain as much support as possible. The Association of the United States Navy (AUSN) has sent letters to the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee bringing the problem to their attention and hundreds of CVCRA Champions and Allies have similarly written their elected officials.





Q. But do you know if the ABMC has a formal position on Clark?

A. In August 2010 the ABMC in a congressional letter indicated they felt it was not in their mission, that it is a veteran support matter properly the responsibility of the VA, and it referred to the Navy's response to its veterans mentioned above as a reason to not move forward. It deferred the entire issue to the VA as a "veteran's benefits issue". It is not difficult to understand its position given the dearth of data and information that was probably available, the not well understood 100 year history, and the destruction of records caused by war. The ABMC assumed incorrectly that "the majority of burials are civilians of many nationalities"; that it is a "private cemetery"; and an erroneous assumption that those advocating for Clark are those "concerned about ...their ability to be buried there when they pass away." Disturbing to many veterans was a remark that struck at their sincerity by stating that, "The vast majority of veterans living around Clark AB cemetery chose to live there for personal reasons."

Q. Is there a preference for what American agency should assume responsibility for the cemetery?

A. The ABMC is the most logical choice given their overseas mission and presence in neighboring Manila, but as stated earlier, the important thing is that the U.S. government recognizes the obligation to its deceased veterans and reassumes control of its cemetery. Clark was and is an American military cemetery with over a hundred year record of American burials, from the Spanish American War to the present. We have focused on the ABMC as the choice most logical and beneficial to the taxpayer. The ABMC maintains the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial south of Clark as well as the Cabanatuan POW Camp Memorial north of Clark. The Clark cemetery is located between the two and it would be simple and inexpensive to add Clark to the ABMC maintenance contract. Clark also has a rich WWII history. Clark was bombed nearly simultaneously with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Death March trains passed within 100 yards of the cemetery and the first hero of WW II earned the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry as his plane crashed just off the north runway after returning from a successful bombing mission of a Japanese warship on December 10, 1941 (December 9th in the US). Similarly the Monument to the Unknown Dead located in the Clark cemetery was damaged during the fighting to liberate Manila in 1945.

Q. Do you think that the ABMC's charter and rules would prevent it from taking charge?

A. One would hope not. Obviously there are other choices ... the VA and USAF being two. Both have responsibilities in the matter. Our government faced a similar situation when the Panama Canal, like the Philippines at one time treated as a U.S. possession, was returned to the Panamanian government. There too was an American cemetery with a lineage to 1904. By Executive Order, the ABMC assumed responsibility in 1982 even though the burials included predominately workers who had labored on the canal. In addition the ABMC is responsible for a small 19th century U.S. military cemetery in Mexico. Also the USAF in 2008 provided \$500,000 to the ABMC to assist with an engineering study of the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial in France whose private foundation had received a \$2.1M USG restoration grant. Where there is a will there is a way.

Q. How can I help?

A. Go to the CVCRA web site, www.cvcra.org, and sign up as Champion (individual) or Ally (organization) and write your elected officials to make your voice heard.

