

Dr. William R. Maples and the Role of the Consultants at the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii

REFERENCE: Hoshower LM. Dr. William R. Maples and the role of the consultants at the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii. *J Forensic Sci* 1999;44(4):689–691.

ABSTRACT: This paper discusses the history and role of the consultants at the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) and the many contributions made by Dr. William R. Maples as a CILHI consultant. For over eleven years Dr. Maples was a prominent and integral force at the CILHI. His involvement with the CILHI as a senior forensic anthropologist began in 1985. In 1986 Dr. Maples signed a contract with the U.S. Army to conduct on-going reviews of the CILHI. He was one of the original consultants and maintained this responsibility until his death. For a significant portion of his professional career Dr. Maples was dedicated to first improving and then maintaining the scientific integrity of the CILHI. The uncompromising ethical and scientific standards by which the Central Identification Laboratory operates today is a direct reflection of the years of input by Dr. William R. Maples.

KEYWORDS: forensic science, forensic anthropology, William R. Maples, consultants, U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory

This paper is about Dr. William R. Maples and his role as a consultant to the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI). As such, a brief background of the laboratory is in order. The U.S. Army is designated as the Executive Agent for the Joint Mortuary Affairs Program. As Executive Agent, the Army maintains a Central Joint Mortuary Affairs Office and the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (Fig. 1). The goal of the CILHI is defined as full accounting for service members lost during past conflicts. Ultimately, full accounting is achieved through the recovery of remains, transportation of the remains to the CILHI, forensic identification of the remains, and the return of the service members to their families. All the CILHI anthropologists supervise world-wide search and recovery missions for the remains of American service members. However, the main focus of the scientific staff is to establish individual identification of the CILHI-recovered remains or remains repatriated by foreign governments using standard, recognized forensic anthropological techniques and procedures.

In the mid-1980s critics alleged that the CILHI had inaccurately identified the remains of personnel listed as killed or otherwise unaccounted for during the Vietnam War. As a result of the contro-

versy generated by the purported misidentifications, the Army asked a team of nationally prominent forensic scientists to conduct an independent review of the CILHI—to assess the laboratory and its work product. The team, composed of Dr. William Maples, Dr. Ellis Kerley, and Dr. Lowell Levine, reviewed the identification process and documentation used by the laboratory, examined the qualifications of personnel dealing with identifications, reviewed selected cases, and inspected the adequacy of the facilities and equipment.

The team submitted a report of their findings, along with 15 recommendations for improvements, in late December 1985. Congressional hearings were held before the House Committee on Armed Services and the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs in 1986 (1) and 1987 to evaluate the degree to which the CILHI had complied with the team's recommendations. It was determined that the Department of the Army had not only concurred with each recommendation, but had also independently initiated actions to implement improvements. A 1992 report to the Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs by the United States General Accounting Office stated that, since the 1986 and 1987 congressional hearings, the CILHI had revised its practices and procedures to ensure that only scientifically accepted techniques and methods are used to identify remains; appointed a board-certified forensic anthropologist as the laboratory's scientific director; hired additional qualified staff to perform the identifications; upgraded its facilities and equipment; and incorporated an extensive review process to minimize the possibility of erroneous identifications. One of the major recommendations made by the review team was to hire outside, senior forensic specialists—both board-certified forensic anthropologists and odontologists—to review identification recommendations made by the CILHI personnel.

Typically, a recommendation for identification case file includes a search and recovery report that details the archeological excavation, casualty data research and analysis detailing the events of loss, medical records, a dental summary if dental remains are involved, an anthropological summary if osseous remains are involved, both dental and anthropological summaries when appropriate, radiographs, and color photographs.

The scientific director of the CILHI forwards the completed case file, with his recommendation for identification, through the deputy commander, to the Commander of the CILHI, a U.S. Army colonel. The case file is then forwarded to the consultants for external review. Typically each case file is reviewed by at least two forensic anthropologists and one forensic odontologist, each a senior board-certified forensic specialist under contract to the U.S. Government as a scientific advisor. The reviews encompass the

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Received 12 March 1998; and in revised form 4 May 1998; accepted 6 July 1998.



FIG. 1—The CILHI logo.

scientific appropriateness of techniques used, completeness and accuracy of the case, and whether or not the proposed identification is supported by the scientific evidence. When the consultant concurs with the CILHI recommendation the case file is forwarded to the Director, Casualty and Memorial Affairs Operations Center (CMAOC), for administrative review and comment. Concurrently, the CMAOC forwards a copy of the case file to the Service Mortuary Affairs Office for administrative review and comment. Should a consultant conclude the scientific work-up is insufficient, the case file is returned with the consultant's written evaluation to the CILHI for further study and the CILHI will be requested to address any comments or suggestions made in the evaluation. Upon return of the case file from the CILHI, the same consultant(s) who originally reviewed the case will be given the file for further evaluation prior to referral to the Director of CMAOC.

The Director of CMAOC forwards the case files, including the consultants evaluations, to the Service Mortuary Affairs Office, who in turn personally notifies the family of the CILHI recommendation and the consultants' evaluation. The family can either accept the findings or, if they choose, have their own expert review the file and/or examine the remains. This is a very rare occurrence and an independent expert, engaged by a family, has never succeeded in providing evidence that would refute the recommended identification. After the family has been given adequate time to present new evidence, the Armed Forces Identification Review Board (AFIRB) acts on the recommendation. The AFIRB, located in Alexandria, Virginia, is a board of senior military officers with one voting member from each of the services.

The AFIRB may also contact the CILHI, the consultants, parent Service Mortuary Affairs Offices, or other experts for further information relevant to the case during their deliberative process. After the AFIRB approves the recommendation, the Service Mortuary Affairs Office notifies the family of the AFIRB decision and requests disposition instructions from the appropriate family member.

Dr. Maples' involvement with the CILHI as a senior forensic anthropologist [an individual described in his own words as "a particular breed" (1:65)] began in 1985. In 1986 he signed a contract with the Army to conduct on-going reviews of the CILHI labora-

tory. In his role as an outside senior forensic specialist—consultant—for almost 12 years, Dr. Maples was an integral part of the CILHI. As a consultant he reviewed an exhaustive number of case files recommended for identification. In fact, Dr. Maples spent three months on Oahu between November 1986 and February 1987 reviewing all recommendations for identifications. He reviewed, not only the files of U.S. personnel killed in South East Asia, but all the case files of World War II and Korean Conflict identifications, as well as the files for mongoloid remains returned to their countries of origin. The CILHI's personnel and staff needs, its current staff, and any improvements that could be made in equipment and the facility were also concerns of Dr. Maples.

One additional obligation of the consultants was travel to the CILHI for semi-annual review procedures. Dr. Maples believed that one could not provide adequate oversight from the laboratory solely from afar. As such, he was very involved in the discussions that led to the establishment of the semi-annual trips to the CILHI. In addition, Dr. Maples believed that multiple consultants, serving on a rotating basis, would ensure the fairness and adequacy of the review process. During his tenure as a CILHI consultant Dr. Maples painstakingly and meticulously double-checked many identifications, noting those that he felt needed additional work. To quote Bill from the 1986 congressional hearings, when the team was asked to return to the CILHI a month after the hearings for a follow-up review, he responded, "I am going back to the laboratory to look at more files and believe me, if they are not good, I will say they are not good (1:68)." This succinct, "cut-to-the-chase" of the matter response was so typical of Dr. Maples. He addressed all phases of his work with a no nonsense, objective, highly ethical, extremely motivated and dedicated approach. He was never jaded by his daily encounters with death and remained forever sensitive to the emotional turmoil experienced by family members. As a direct reflection of his professionalism, he did not allow these emotions to cloud his objectivity.

Frequently Dr. Maples played the devil's advocate on his semi-annual visits to the CILHI by challenging—not necessarily disagreeing with—age estimates and other forensic conclusions drawn by the scientific staff. He enjoyed debating case work and case files with the assigned anthropologist. Dr. Maples believed that a fresh outlook and free debate would make every identification more reliable and trustworthy. I should have been accustomed to these discussions from my experiences with Bill in his laboratory at the University of Florida. Yet I recall his first visit to the CILHI after I was hired. I was sitting at one of the examination tables working on a case when Bill walked into the room and joined me at the table. Immediately I felt myself slip back into the graduate student-professor role, justifying my conclusions with some trepidation. After a lively debate in which I did most of the talking, Bill agreed with my conclusions and I breathed a sigh of relief. Such 'free debate' did indeed stimulate numerous spirited discussions—discussions that I miss to this day and will continue to miss throughout my career.

One of the things about Bill that the majority of people at the CILHI recall from his visits was his always dry and sometimes sardonic wit. In the middle of many an intense discussion, he could be counted on to break the tension with a one-liner that was very appropriate and funny at the time.

During every visit to the CILHI Dr. Maples maintained an intense, very business-oriented agenda. In fact, this grueling schedule has been referred to as "slaving in paradise" by fellow consultant Dr. Ted Rathbun. Before each visit Dr. Maples would establish an extensive list of matters that he felt needed to be addressed.

Dealing with these issues, discussing personnel needs, evaluating the adequacy of the staff, and suggesting improvements in equipment occupied his time while on the island. Although Dr. Maples' visits to the CILHI were characteristically all business and no play, he did find the time for three almost ritualistic events. The first and only one of these was self-indulgent. And that was treating himself to a bowl of his favorite oriental soup. No trip was complete without it. The other two events, buying macadamia nut brittle and shopping at the Ala Moana mall, were for Margaret—for she was always foremost in his thoughts. To quote Dr. Michael Finnegan, "Bill set the standards for gifts for wives. The first few years I wondered what to get Barbara and Bill would tell me what he was looking for Margaret. Lowell (Levine) and I would follow suit. Well, after a few years, I would just ask him, What are we getting the women this trip?"

Over the years Dr. Maples continued to make recommendations to the Department of the Army for the improvement and enhancement of the identification process. Most of these suggestions were readily accepted by the military with, as Bill stated: "a ready will and friendly spirit of cooperation (2:189)." Some of the specific recommendations made by Dr. Maples after his first visit in 1985 included: hiring an anthropological staff with specific forensic experience; hiring of separate anthropology and odontology section chiefs; utilizing a military photographer with training in forensic photography; expanding the reference library; providing every anthropologist with a personal computer; improving, enhancing, and expanding scientific equipment; enlarging the current facility or constructing a new building; placing an anthropologist on every field recovery mission; hiring of outside experts to review identifications; establishing a visiting scientist program to encourage professional exchanges between the CILHI staff and colleagues as well as familiarize outside experts with the functions and procedures of the CILHI; and one that this author particularly appreciates—considerably increasing travel funds to get the scientific staff to relevant conferences and meetings. Many of these recommendations were implemented by Dr. Maples' second visit to the CILHI in 1986 and the remainder were in place by 1991.

In fact, today, the CILHI is the largest skeletal identification laboratory in the world. To quote Dr. Maples, it is: "one of the most modern, best-equipped forensic identification laboratories in the world. Within its walls some of the most searching and painstaking forensic identification work imaginable is carried out with every tool available to modern science (2:190)." The CILHI retains a staff of 15 forensic anthropologists, 2 forensic odontologists, 18 military photographers, and a support staff of 140. The 22,693 square-foot facility, located on Hickam Air Force Base, island of Oahu, houses state-of-the art equipment (Fig. 2). The CILHI will soon receive a scanning electron microscope (SEM) and has plans to install its own DNA laboratory, devoted exclusively to establishing the identifications of unaccounted-for service members—an advancement for which Maples had long been an advocate.



FIG. 2—The US Army Central Identification Laboratory.

From his initial involvement in the 1985 review process, until his death in 1997, Dr. Maples was an integral part of the CILHI. He was one of the original consultants and maintained this responsibility until his death. Dr. Maples was committed to ensuring that only scientifically accepted techniques and methodologies were employed to identify remains, that qualified staff were hired to perform identifications and supervise field work, and he helped initiate and was active in the extensive internal and external review process. For a significant portion of his life, Dr. Maples was dedicated to first improving and then maintaining the scientific integrity of the CILHI. Indeed, Dr. Maples brought with him to the CILHI the mannerisms of the consummate professional—an attribute that permeated all of his life's works and deeds. The uncompromising ethical and scientific standards by which the Central Identification Laboratory operates today are a direct reflection of the years of input by Dr. William Maples.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Mr. Thorne Helgesen, Dr. Thomas Holland, and an anonymous reviewer for their comments. Also, a special thank you to Dr. Dana Austin-Smith and Dr. Tony Falsetti for the opportunity to participate in the symposium honoring Dr. Maples. The views expressed are those of the author and should not be construed to represent the U.S. government.

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