

What Happened to Gunnery Sergeant Stanley Kovato?

By Chuck Tatum

As I said before, I didn't really care much for the machine gun platoon Gunnery Sergeant, Stanley Kovato. The Gunney was o.k. but things had happened that precluded our being close friends. (Not that Gunnies pal around with PFC's like me!) Although we had pulled liberty together back in Pearl Harbor, the fact that I wasn't a card-carrying member of his fan club doesn't change the fact that he was a top-notch Marine and a super Gunnery Sergeant.

Gunnery Sergeant Kovato and First Lieutenant Dreger went in together on the same LVT on the morning of February 19, 1945. I didn't see their tank hit the beach, although I remember seeing him in the LVT as we circled around waiting to go into the hell that we would encounter on the black sands of Iwo Jima.

It's my understanding that the same shell burst that got Lieutenant Dreger got the Gunney. Stanley Anthony Kovato died of his wounds on the 20th of February, D+1 aboard the U.S.S. Highlands (APA 199). He is buried in Grave 97, Section "F", National Cemetery of the Pacific.

In my search for survivors of Kovato, I remembered that he hailed from Pottstown, a city about 30 miles from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My telephone call to the long distance operator led me to his brother, Joseph

Kovatto (spelled with two T's). Joseph is the younger brother of the late Gunney. I asked if the family had any pictures of the Sergeant and Joseph told me that Kovato's former wife, Grace (nee Grace Wells) had the only pictures of his brother. I then asked was she still living? Joseph replied that he believed she was, but he had lost track of her. Joseph disclosed that Grace had entered a convent after her husband's death and that hadn't worked out and she left the convent later to remarry. It was at this point that he lost track of her.

Joseph told me that he had lost contact with all of his brothers. When I asked what Kovato had done before the war, I was told that "Blackie" had joined the National Guard. This would explain his Gunney Sergeant rank with only two and one-half years in the Corps. Joseph mentioned that Kovato had worked as an instructor at the Y.M.C.A. in Pottstown. When I asked Joseph if he would like a complimentary copy of my book when it's published, he told me that it wouldn't be necessary.

Following are versions of the U.S.M.C. Casualty Report and burial bulletin for Gunnery Sergeant Stanley Anthony Kovato:

USMC CASUALTY REPORT Date: 8Mar45 Card: No Cas. No. 016467

Name Rank Class Ident. No.

Kovato, Stanley Anthony Gy/Sgt USMCR 399464

Organization Type of Casualty Area Date of Casualty

Co. B., 1stBn, 27th Mar, KIA Pac 19Feb45
5thMarDiv, FMF. 1-6355

Date Appt/Enlist Place of Appt/Enlist Date Active Duty PriorSer

18May42 Philadelphia, Pa. 18May42 No

Misc. Sta. Marital Race Date of Birth Place of Birth

M W 23Mar17 Reading, Pa.

Legal Residence Next of Kin Relation Address of Kin

Pottstown, Pa Mrs. Grace H. Kovato Wife Blacked out
Mrs. Laura Kovato Mother Blacked out

Beneficiary (Name and Address)

DGB, Mrs. Grace H. Kovato, wife, same address as above.

Place of Casualty Nature of Wound Present Status

Iwo, Volcano Is 8-46-001 left blank left blank

Remarks (Additional Information – Disposition of Remains)

Buried Grave #63, Row #4, Plot #1, 5th MarDivCemetery, Iwo, Volcano Islands, 25Feb45

Date and Source of Report

RAD#052015, CD#57740 rec'd 7Mar45 fr CG, FMF, PAC to MACORPS,
5thMD Rpt#1, rec'd CasDiv 7MAR45

Name Rank Class Ident. No.

Kovato, Stanley Anthony Gy/Sgt USMCR 399464

Burial Bulletin#3, Hqs, 5thMarDiv (rein) dtd 24Feb44, rec'd 13Mar45 (lj)
Frac. comp Tibia, Fibula and Oscalcus, bilateral.cps, Rep fr USS
HIGHLANDS (APA-119) to Cmdr, AdmComd, AmphFrcs, PacFlt, rec'd
22Mar445 (mbb)

Cert of Death fr U.S.S. HIGHLANDS (APA-199) rec'd 10Apr45 states man
DOW 20Feb45 (mbb)

Service Record Book Received July 26 1945 states GSW head, legs (cr)
*Change in status taken fr Cert of death fr USS HIGHLANDS rec'd 10Apr45
(OK-ECC) (ehs)

Widow req remains interred in a permanent American military cem
overseas. Appl dated 30Oct47. (mcg) Conf by Guam ltr dtd June 15, 1948.
(vm)

National Cemetery of the Pacific
Section F Grave 97