



## Navy Veteran finally at rest ...

In our January 2018 newsletter we told you the story of the Akin family who lost their beloved husband/father/grandfather in July 2018. This is the final chapter of their story.

The military cemetery near Redding CA was to have been the site of Larry Akin's interment last summer, but the Carr Fire in July 2018 caused a delay and it was rescheduled for November 18. Tragically, the massive Camp Fire swept through Magalia reducing the Akin home to ash and debris. Larry's cremated remains lay in the midst of the debris, seemingly lost forever.

The morning of February 22 was clear and crisp as Larry's family and friends gathered on a hilltop, overlooking snow-covered mountains. Finally, they were going to place Larry's remains where he wanted to be, the Northern California Veterans Cemetery in Igo. The two canine teams that assisted in Larry's recovery were honored to be invited to participate in the memorial service.

As Adela and I arrived, the family greeted us with open arms. Everyone there knew who Jasper and Piper were and what we had been able to do to help locate and recover Larry's cremains. We were treated like family. The ceremony was beautiful and touching, bringing tears to everyone's eyes as Anchors Aweigh was played, and the flag was folded and presented to the family. Then we moved to the interment on a hillside covered with the white markers seen at military cemeteries ... all the same, straight lines and memories of lives given in service to our country.

Participating in the memorial was an honor to both Adela and me. Piper and Jasper received love and scratches from everyone and we were again thankful that we were able to play a part in making this happen. The family asked that we be sure to relay their thanks to the rest of the team.

*Lynne Engelbert*





## Camp Fire Cremains Recovery Completed



After six rotations over three months to Paradise, we're exhausted, but *gratified*. Pictured above is a portion of the **66 archaeologists, 11 dog handlers, 14 detection dogs, and 3 support personnel** who volunteered their time. Cumulatively, we donated **492 days** of field work. Another 100+ days went into coordinating with clients and planning / preparing for this huge endeavor. Together, the team searched the debris of **183 homes** that reportedly contained the previously cremated remains of 251 people. (These varied from full sets to ~ 1 tablespoon.) Preliminary data shows we were able to locate and at least partially recover 214 sets of cremains. This means that **the remains of 214 loved ones are *not* bound for a toxic waste dump**. Gratifying indeed! Below are just some of the many messages of thanks we have received from clients over the last months.

"Thank you for ALL that you do! You have helped my family in ways that just can't be quantified. Much love to you all."

"The entire group was compassionate, professional and sensitive throughout the entire process. Their services provide a lifetime of gratefulness in reuniting loved ones."

"This was the greatest Christmas gift of all."

"Thank u so much for finding my parents cremains. It means the world to me when I've lost everything. You were all so kind and helpful!"

"The peace and comfort you have given my family is priceless. Thank you!"

"Thank you for your services. You gave me peace of mind and closure, knowing that my loved ones weren't being left behind."

"I will be eternally grateful for being able to have the ashes of my daughter, Sumerlyn and my sweet husband Jimmy returned to me. Losing them was heartbreaking enough but to think their ashes would end up in a dump was unbearable. Words cannot express my gratitude and how amazing the dogs and their handlers were. Thank you so much for your compassion, kindness and hard work. God bless you all."

The sentiments above remind us why this previously unrecognized effort is so important. In between searches, representatives of ICF, ALTA, and ESA have been meeting with government officials to raise awareness and are working toward toward **cremains recovery becoming part of the standard state and federal response to wildfire disasters**. You can help by writing to your representative.

Because no one should lose a loved one twice...

#### **The Team:**

[Institute for Canine Forensics](#) (ICF)

[Alta Archaeological Consulting - Professional Archaeologist](#) (ALTA)

[Environmental Science Associates](#) (ESA)

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## **Cremains Recovery Team Peaks Interest of Arson Investigators**

On February 9, Peter Arnet and E. R. Scott Baker joined the Cremains Recovery Team in Paradise CA on our 5<sup>th</sup> recovery rotation to the area. Pete and Scotty are both Master-certified Fire Investigators and past presidents of the California Conference of Arson Investigators. We are hoping for their support and possibly that of the CCAI. We received the following from Pete.

## **Observation on a Cold and Blustery Day**

“Scott and I joined the Institute for Canine Forensics Cremains Recovery Team on a cold, blustery day in early February. We had heard about the work they were doing after the Camp Fire, helping families in Paradise recover the cremated remains of their family members left behind during the evacuation on November 8, 2018. As arson investigators, and former detection dog handlers, we wanted to see for ourselves what these teams were doing in what seemed like impossible conditions.

We watched as Lynne Engelbert and her dog Piper, properly geared up in personal protective equipment, entered a completely burned out home. Piper worked her way through the 8” of ash and debris, searching for the scent of cremated remains. At one point her nose came up, then back down to the debris. It appeared that she had caught scent, and she began working into where it was strongest. She downed, looking at Lynne, which is her trained alert. Lynne marked the area with a florescent green pin flag and the team of experienced archaeologists began their work, the recovery of Jimmy, the deceased son of their client. I should mention that, at that point, the wind was blowing and it was pouring rain, yet everyone continued working.

Scott and I are accustomed to dogs that work very quickly. We were told that the ICF dogs are trained to work slowly and methodically because of the nature of the “fragile” scent they are trained to locate and alert on. We were impressed with Piper's work and also impressed with the archaeologists who worked their way into the source (in this case, cremains) the same way arson fire investigators do.

Within an hour, Jimmy’s cremains had been recovered and returned to his grateful dad who had stood calmly watching the entire process. Lucky thanked the team and, with tears of gratitude in his eyes, thanked Piper as well. The team would repeat this process at four home sites that day.”

*Peter Arnet, Master Fire Investigator*

*Past President, California Conference of Arson Investigators*

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## **Our GoFundMe is still Gooooing!**

In addition to the 492 days volunteered, the Camp Fire cremains recovery effort costs exceed \$43,000 to feed, shelter, transport, and provide disposable protective gear for the volunteers. So far, our GoFundMe has raised approximately half of the needed funds. (A huge thanks to all who donated, so far!) But that leaves over \$21,000 to be borne by our volunteers. Please keep our efforts moving by sharing our Go Fund Me page - [Returning Lost Loved Ones](#).



Thank you for supporting our Cremains Recovery Team and making this whole effort happen. Because no one should lose a loved one twice...

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Check out our past issues on our website -

[CLICK HERE](#)



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(650) 503-4473 | [info@ICFK9.org](mailto:info@ICFK9.org) | [www.ICFK9.org](http://www.ICFK9.org)

We are happy to talk with you about your project and how our dogs might help locate human remains or burials.

Call, email, or check out our website.

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