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## New Headstone at Arlington for Marine Private Who Fell on Last Day of WWI



Dennis Anderson (left) and Garrett Anderson (right) at the gravestone of WWI soldier Pvt. Joseph Otto Turley, at Arlington National Cemetery, November 11, 2018. (Richard Sisk/Military.com)

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Military.com | By [Richard Sisk](#)

At the far end of Arlington National Cemetery, where many of the "doughboys" of World War I rest forever in Section 18, a small ceremony on [Veterans Day](#) marked the placement of a new, corrected headstone for a [Marine](#) private who fell on the last day of battle.

For nearly a century, the headstone for Pvt. Joseph Otto Turley recorded his date of death as Nov. 2, 1918. But it was a tragic mixup at the end of the war; Nov. 2 was actually the date that Turley's brother, Tom, also a Marine private, was wounded.

"He never had a funeral where any of the family attended," former Marine Lance Cpl. Garrett Anderson, who fought in the second battle of Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004, said of his great uncle, who was known as "Otto" and died at age 24.

["We just knew this had to be done," Anderson said of the new headstone](#) that includes Turley's correct day of death.

He died Nov. 12, 1918, a day after the armistice ending World War I took effect.

"I don't doubt his end must have been horrific," Anderson said of Otto Turley, who was mortally wounded by machine gun fire on Nov. 11, 1918, and died in a field hospital the next day.

"Knowing it was wrong just kinda' stuck in our craw," Dennis Anderson, Garrett's father, said of the incorrect date on the tombstone. The headstone had stood uncorrected since 1921, when Otto Turley's remains were disinterred from a cemetery in France and reburied at Arlington.

The family was from Auburn, Washington, and none came to the reburial or ever visited to notice that the date was wrong.

Garrett and Dennis Anderson never found out about their relative in Arlington until a great aunt, Averill Raymond, died in 2006 and they found letters she kept in an old trunk. They revealed the story of three Turley brothers -- Otto, Tom and Jess -- who all joined the [Marines](#) on Dec. 11, 1917.

Dennis Anderson said he later received a phone call from Garrett.

"I think we'd better find out about Uncle Otto," Garrett Anderson had said.

They began checking records and started a search that took them to the World War I battlefields of France and then to Arlington, where they were stunned to find the date was wrong. Officials at Arlington quickly agreed to a new headstone once they were presented with documentation.

At the graveside ceremony Sunday, Staff Sgt. Danny Venora, 27, of West Hartford, Connecticut, a member of "Pershing's Own" U.S. [Army](#) Band, played

Taps.

Marine Maj. Matthew Bronson, who as a lieutenant was Garrett Anderson's commanding officer in Fallujah with 1st Battalion, Third Marines, joined in the tribute to another Marine of the "Great War."

"I'm just pretty impressed," Bronson said, with the persistence of the Andersons in getting the record corrected.

In his remarks, Dennis Anderson noted the horrific rate at which Americans fell in battle in World War I from the time they first entered the trenches in June 1918 until the end of the war on Nov. 11.

The official statistics show that more than 116,000 Americans were killed, but only about 55,000 fell in combat. The rest died of the Spanish flu epidemic, Dennis Anderson said.

"Their rate of death was the same, ultimately, as the British, the French and the Germans -- 2,500 a week, 10,000 a month," he said.

After arriving on the Western Front in June 1918, "[The three Turley brothers] would have experienced every month, for five months, their own personal Gettysburg. Because that was the scale of those fights, that's how people were cut down," Dennis Anderson said.

Just before Ventura played "Taps," Garrett Anderson read from one of the poems of British 2nd Lt. Wilfred Owen, who was killed on Nov. 4, 1918.

"I have perceived much beauty

In the hoarse oaths that kept our courage straight;

Heard music in the silentness of duty;

Found peace where shell-storms spouted reddest spate."

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