

Laying a hero to rest

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Gallup says goodbye to Hiroshi “Hershey” Miyamura

“Friend, generous, and hero” were a few of the words spoken about the late Cpl. Hiroshi “Hershey” Miyamura, a U.S. Army Medal of Honor recipient, as he was laid to rest Dec. 10 at Sunset Memorial Park in Gallup.

Miyamura was given full military honors at Sunset Memorial Park following his funeral services at First Methodist Church. A funeral procession of mourners traveled down Highway 66 to the burial site. Vehicles lined the side of the highway and people stood by paying their last respects to Miyamura as the hearse passed by.

The procession was greeted at the entrance to the burial site with the U.S. flag flying boldly to honor Miyamura. Sirens could be heard as the police motorcade made its way into the memorial burial site. Veterans stood by at attention.

It was a somber moment as the procession came to a stop. Various veterans were in attendance, offering their salute respectfully along with other military members.

Among the people present to pay their respects was Army Staff Sgt. Keith Desautels of Thoreau, who said he simply showed up to render honors for another veteran. Having met Miyamura twice in Gallup, Desautels says he has several pictures in his office of him and Miyamura.

“I just showed up with the rest of the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] to render final honors as he was being laid to rest ... to do this for another veteran was indeed an honor,” Desautels said.

The Third Infantry Division of the Army proudly volunteered their services. Presentation of Colors was shouted out as Miyamura was taken out of the hearse.

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Deputy Wing Chaplain Craig Nakagawa, of Kirtland Air Force Base, gave a short eulogy describing the hero.

Nakagawa quoted the Book of Isaiah, "... I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I; send me.'"

Nakagawa described Miyamura as a man with numerous attributes, and he said he was honored to give the eulogy.

"It was serendipitous considering I had a grandfather who also was a second-generation Japanese 'nisei,'" Nakagawa said.

While he was speaking of Miyamura, he said he remembered his smile and his candor.

After the eulogy, in traditional military fashion, a 21-gun salute and the playing of "Taps" rounded out the ceremony. Next, folding of the flag commenced, and those in attendance lowered their heads in a moment of silence.

Off in the distance, four military helicopters flew overhead to further honor Miyamura. The folded American flag, along with the Medal of Honor and the State of New Mexico flags, were presented to daughter Pat Miyamura. Each member of the family received an American flag.

As members of the military took their leave, family members said their last goodbyes to their beloved patriarch by placing roses on the casket.

Miyamura's granddaughter, Marisa Miyamura-Reagan, was grateful to everyone who showed up for the funeral. She said that the amount of people present spoke to how her grandfather lived and how much he gave back to the community.

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“This was his last goodbye to everybody and it was amazing to see the support and the people that were able to come out and show that to him and the family,” Miyamura-Reagan said. “I think it’s a testament to him and how he impacted people and it was great to see.”

Miyamura-Reagan, a Major in the U.S. Air Force, said her grandfather inspired her to join the military.

“He personally impacted me 100%, and he was the reason why I joined the military. I saw how wonderful the man he was just as a grandfather and the fact that he had that military background behind that – I wanted to be a part of that,” Miyamura-Reagan said.

Miyamura received his Medal of Honor for his actions on April 24-25, 1951 during the Korean War. During a night attack by the Chinese, he saw that his squad could not hold much longer, so he ordered his men to retreat. However, he remained behind to cover their withdrawal, killing an estimated minimum of 50 invading Chinese forces. Miyamura was captured immediately after staying to cover his retreating allies and was awarded the Medal of Honor upon his release on Aug. 20, 1953.

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