

## 'We were devastated ... my father was never the same'

remains and four sets of dog tags. One of the tags belonged to Ray E. Thompson. The wreckage showed no sign of fire or explosion, according to a 2012 military report on recovery and identification efforts.

Family members traveled to Arlington National Cemetery for a special ceremony in 1974, honoring the 10 men and interring their combined remains in two caskets and a common gravesite.

A 1974 article in *The Oregonian* quotes older sister Daisy Seaman, now deceased, who said the identification tag discovery forced the family to put any remaining hopes aside and finally move on.

"The Army had declared him dead two years after the crash," she said, "but we always had lingering doubts. We weren't sure, but what he was still alive, maybe wandering around not knowing who he was."

She said the family hadn't realized his job included flying, saying, "We knew he was an airplane mechanic, but he didn't want anyone to know he was flying for fear we would worry."

When more wreckage turned up in 2002 and 2008 within a couple miles of the 1974 wreckage, more human bones went to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command Central Identification Laboratory in Oahu, Hawaii, to be sorted out and identified. Blood from two of Ray's female cousins helped investigators do DNA matching and conclusively identify Thompson's remains.

Tomlinson said she feels gratitude to the United States government for its tenacity in bringing home lost warriors.

"They've taken all this time, money and effort to make sure families know what happened," she said.

She's sorry her parents and other sib-

lings, including their oldest sister Daisy, never got to hear the final chapter. Tomlinson, her husband (also named Ray) and other family members will gather in Pendleton at 10 a.m., April 10, for a graveside service at Olney Cemetery. The Pendleton VFW members will assist with the service.

Tomlinson, who was taking care of arrangements at Pendleton Pioneer Chapel on Tuesday, smiled as she shared memories of Ray, brushing aside tears that still come when she thinks about her big brother.

She signed funeral home papers with a careful hand.

"I'm hoping this will finally put things to rest."

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