



## My Story

"I'm a Veteran" retired, proud to be an American

The ordeal was bloody, miserable, and largely ignored. But half a century after the Korean War ended in a draw, its veterans can take pride in a larger victory.

It was on June 25, 1950 – the Communist forces of North Korea, with backing from the Soviet Union, invaded their neighbor to the South. President Harry Truman ordered the troops to the Korean Peninsula, that's when things really got bad. We started to chase North Koreans merely as far as the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel or perhaps a line of defense somewhat North and then to the Yalu River, North Korea's border with China.

As my buddy and I kept pushing true, we work around the clock. It was cold and our clothes weren't warm enough; food was short. I lost my best friend. He had a rosary in his hands; what was left of him. We later heard that February 15<sup>th</sup> the tide began to turn for us.

It's not often in wartime that a single battlefield commander can make a decisive difference. General Ridgway would prove to be the exception. Still the war went on for two more years; a cruel, bitter grinding tug of war that marched China's superior manpower against the U.S. superior fire power. At the end of the three years of back and forth fighting, cease fire took effect on July 22, 1953 and set the border between North and South Korea at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, exactly where it began.

The Korean War wasn't a noisy affair. Labeled a "police action", it was regarded as necessary but not glamorous. No battle hymns stirred American souls, and when the conflict ended many years ago it was a whimper; titled "The Forgotten War". It's about time people recognized there was a war.

As I look back with pride, people say that the Korean War was an important stand for freedom. We lost thousands. I'm not a hero, the men and women left behind are the heroes. I will always remember them. "God Bless Them".

To all the guys who fought so well under such difficult circumstances, with so little reward from the society back home, we owed and still owe a great deal. The Korean War ended in a stalemate, but in the larger sense it was a victory.

by Joe Spano, retired Air Force, 32 years

*Sixty years after the end of the Korean War, the Defense Department, for the first time, put a float in Pasadena's Tournament of Roses Parade, recognizing Korean War Veterans.*

*The float, "Freedom is Not Free", was a replica of the Korean War Veterans' Memorial in Washington, DC.*

*The Editor*

