



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Allegany County Veteran Hermon L. Foster Honored in Medal Ceremony

CATHARINE YOUNG January 18, 2014

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*U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Hermon L. Foster Receives Awards for Service in Korean War*

GENESEE - Decades after the Korean War armistice, Bolivar native Hermon Foster has finally received the awards he earned serving on the Korean Peninsula. At a ceremony held this afternoon at the Faith Bible Church in Little Genesee, on his 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday,

Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I - Olean) presented Corporal Foster with the medals he earned by his outstanding record of military service.

After speaking with Corporal Foster at a ceremony honoring fellow veteran Lyle Edwards of Bolivar last year, Senator Young learned of Corporal Foster's service and missing awards. Her office contacted the Marine Corps and initiated the appropriate requests to obtain the long-overdue medals and decorations presented today.

"The Korean War is sometimes referred to as the Forgotten War due to the lack of attention it receives in comparison to World War II, Vietnam, and other American wars. We have a duty and obligation to make sure Corporal Foster and all of our Korean War veterans are not forgotten, but receive the recognition they deserve. For his great service to our nation, I am honored to be able to present Corporal Foster with these medals today," said Senator Young.

A Bolivar, New York, native, Cpl. Hermon Foster was born on January 18, 1932. In 1951 he graduated from Richburg High School, where he held a varsity letter for soccer.

On November 7, 1951, he enlisted in the Marine Corps, beginning what would become eight years of devoted service.

Corporal Foster's initial training took him to Parris Island, South Carolina. There he earned Sharpshooter and Marksman badges for the M-1 Rifle and also qualified on the .45 caliber Colt automatic pistol, the M-14 carbine, and the Browning Automatic Rifle. While serving with the 5<sup>th</sup> Recruit Training Battalion, he was formally appointed a private first class for meritorious achievement.

Following additional infantry training with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Training Regiment in Oceanside, California, then-Private First Class Foster attended machine gun school and was assigned as an ammunition carrier with the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division's 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Company D.

With this unit, he was deployed overseas to Korea, where his duties expanded to include machine gunner and he was also promoted to the rank of corporal.

On June 3, 1952, Corporal Foster and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, also known as the “Old Breed,” entered into combat and would continue fighting for the next 11 months. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division was attached to the U.S. 8<sup>th</sup> Army, which two months earlier had begun Operation Mixmaster, a massive redeployment of United Nations forces designed to move more South Korean Army units to the front lines.

Corporal Foster and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division were assigned to the far western end of the U.N. front, defending a 35-mile line that encompassed the Pyongyang to Seoul corridor. For much of the next year, in what would be called the “Outpost War,” small, localized actions defined the combat along the line, with the holding and retaking of various combat outposts in strategically important terrain.

The war changed in March 1953 when Chinese forces launched a massive offensive across the U.N. line. Heavy fighting persisted until the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement on July 27, 1953. Hostilities and armed combat ended and the war has remained at a ceasefire ever since.

In the course of the Korean War, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division suffered combat casualties amounting to 4,004 dead and 25,864 wounded. For his part, Corporal Foster was wounded three times during heavy combat in a six-week period between September and October 1952. Each time, Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps, personally wrote to Corporal Foster’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harmon L. Foster, to reassure and inform them that their son had been wounded but was not evacuated and was able to return to duty.

“I fully realize the anxiety caused when a loved one is reported wounded, and I am pleased in this case to be able to give you reassurance,” the General wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Foster.

On May 4, 1953, Corporal Foster left Korea aboard the troop ship USNS General Nelson M. Walker, arriving in San Francisco nearly two weeks later. He was then assigned as a fire team leader and later squad leader with the Fleet Marine Force, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division's 8<sup>th</sup> Marines, Weapons Company, at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

From this assignment, he would again deploy several times aboard Navy ships. One tour would take him to Puerto Rico; a second involved a four month Mediterranean cruise in support of the Sixth Fleet.

Corporal Foster was separated on November 6, 1954, having completed three years of active duty, one year and seven months of which was spent overseas. He was then assigned as a Class II Ready Reservist to Headquarters with the First Marine Corps Reserve and Recruitment District in Garden City, New York. With this assignment, Corporal Foster was obligated to serve as a reinforcement for the 8<sup>th</sup> Marines, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division.

In 1957, he was placed in standby reserve and finally discharged on November 6, 1959.

After returning home, he met and married his wife Mavis on June 10, 1961. Together they raised their three sons: Steven, William, and Daniel. In addition, Hermon and Mavis now have a total of seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

The Fosters are a strong military family, with many members following in Corporal Foster's footsteps and also serving, either directly or as civilians working in the military. Sons Steven and Daniel both joined the U.S. Army and grandson Shawn is currently serving in the Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

In honor of his heroic service, Senator Young presented to Corporal Foster a Purple Heart Medal with Two Gold Star Devices, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Navy Unit Commendation for Korea Service, the Navy Occupation Service Medal with Europe Bar, the National Defense Service Medal, the Korean Service Medal with Two Bronze

Service Stars, the United Nations Korea Medal, the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, and the Republic of Korea War Service Medal.

In addition, from the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs, he received the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross with Two Silver Devices and the Conspicuous Service Star with One Silver Device.

Speaking about the scars of battle, both seen and unseen, that Corporal Foster has borne from his experiences in the war, Mavis said, "He fought the war here all the time. It was not easy for him. But he feels very good that he could serve his country. He was glad he served his country and would do it again if he had to."

"For all he's done for us, we owe Corporal Foster an enormous debt. As inadequate as these medals may seem in comparison to his great service and sacrifice, it is my hope that they might help in conveying our tremendous thanks and appreciation. Corporal Foster has our highest respect and admiration for his willingness to fight for our country," said Senator Young.

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