

Way We Were
Steve Spaulding, Collections Volunteer
Wednesday, June 25, 2014
The Forgotten War

The Korean War, referred to as "The Forgotten War" due to a lack of public interest, lasted from June 25, 1950 to July 27, 1953; it was between South Korea, supported by the U.N., and North Korea, supported by China and the U.S.S.R. North Korean forces invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950 after tensions reached a boiling point following the division of the Korean peninsula at the end of World War II. In response to the invasion, members of the U.N. Security Council authorized military intervention.

Numerous young men from the Park City area heeded the call when U.S. forces were sent to Korea. These soldiers deserve recognition and remembrance.

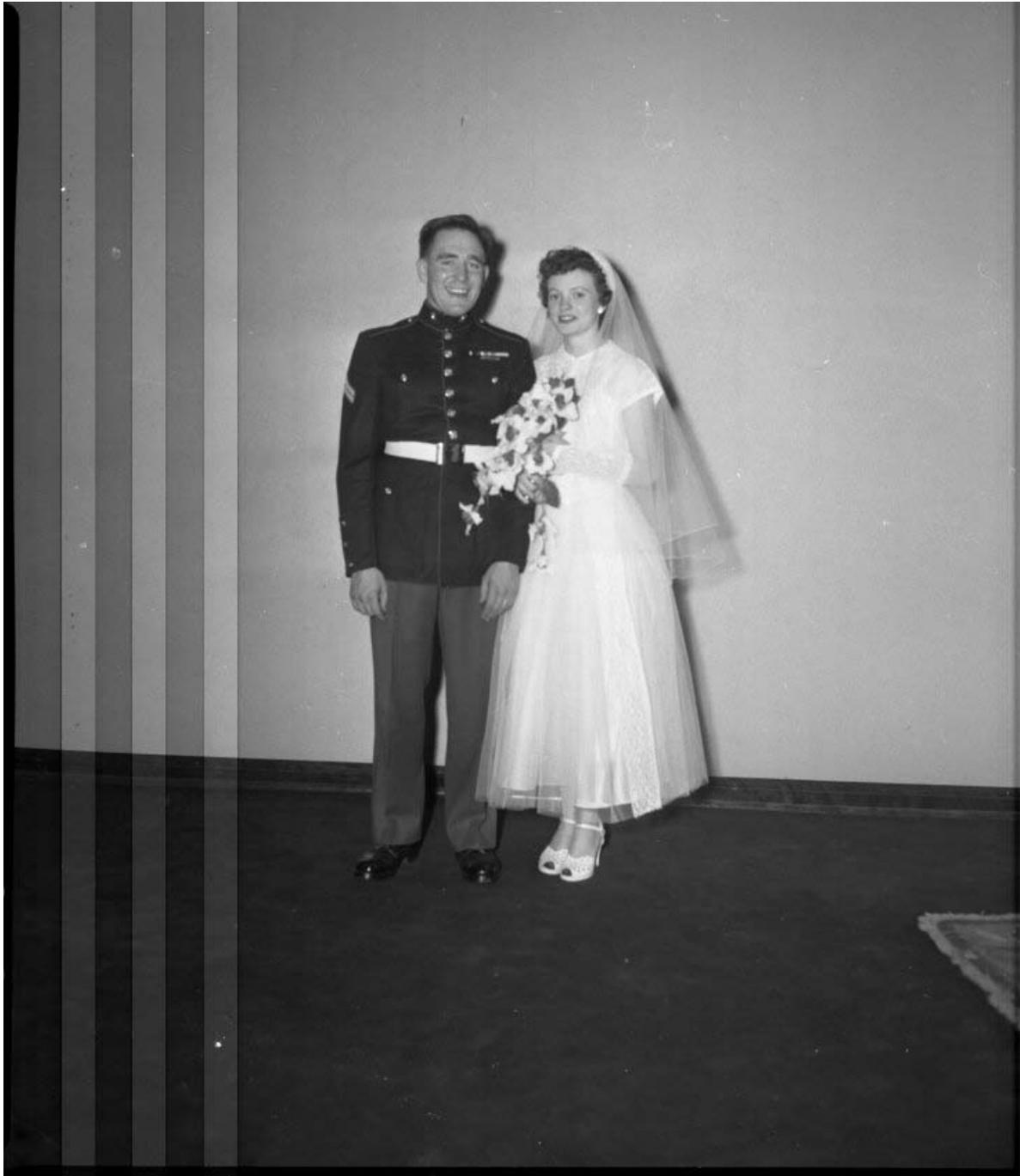
It is estimated that the U.S. suffered 33,686 battle deaths in the war. One of those casualties was Sergeant Donald White, a native Parkite, killed in August 1950. Another who made the ultimate sacrifice was Private First Class Tony Martinez. He enlisted in the military as a junior in high school in 1948; he reenlisted in 1950 and was sent immediately to Korea. His death came in combat near Anju on November 5, 1950. For heroism in combat, PFC Martinez was posthumously awarded the bronze star medal and in March 1955, he was laid to rest in Park City Cemetery with full military honors.

Other local men were recognized for acts of valor. In 1951, PFC Del Alvey was awarded the bronze star for destroying a machine gun emplacement and carrying a wounded comrade from the battlefield under intense enemy fire; he had joined the Army at age 17 and served four years in Korea. Second Lieutenant Gerry Keating was awarded the bronze star for actions the evening of July 21, 1953, when he successfully led his tank forces through enemy territory to safety and rescued two wounded comrades, all while being exposed to constant, heavy enemy fire; Lt. Keating was a veteran of World War II as well.

The Purple Heart, awarded to those wounded or killed in action, was given to several Parkites. In a letter dated Dec 14, 1950, Sergeant Guy Gillett explained that he received two purple hearts after being wounded in two separate battles. Gillett said he and another man were the only ones left in their squadron and 1/3 of their division was lost in battle at the Chosin Reservoir; he enlisted in the army at the age of 17 and served for 22 years including duty in Vietnam. PFC David Street was another recipient of a purple heart.

Corporal Jim Santy is another notable who participated in the Korean War. Cpl Santy was in Park City High School's class of 1951 but he joined the Marines in January 1951 and was already a PFC when his classmates graduated. He did several tours of duty aboard the carrier USS Valley Forge. Cpl Santy received a letter of commendation in 1953 praising his "outstanding performance of duty" as a squad leader and mount captain of a 40mm antiaircraft gun. Perhaps lessons learned in the military and in wartime influenced his capabilities as a leader in the Park City community.

The Park City Historical Society & Museum is celebrating 30 years of preserving, protecting, and promoting Park City's history and heritage.



Image# 1953.52.2

Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum, Kendall Webb Collection

Caption: Dressed in military uniform, Corporal Jim Santy and Carol Berry say their wedding vows on July 11, 1953, shortly after his return from Korea.