Recalling the man who did not forget

Next Tuesday, July 27, will be the 40th anniversary of the cease-fire that history books recognize as the official end of the Korean War.

It's a shame Tony Zdanavage won't be here.

If America marks the day at all, it will be due in part to Tony's tireless efforts over many years on behalf of his comrades in arms.

Korea is the war America wanted to forget. But Tony wouldn't allow it.

Too many of his fellow GIs died: 54,246, according to government records, 33,629 of them in combat.

Too many were wounded: 103,284.

Too many — an estimated 8,000 POW/MIA's — never came home and are still unaccounted for.

Tony, himself a survivor of a North Korean prison, couldn't forget, wouldn't forget.

When the nation refused to construct a Korean War memorial, he built one in the yard of his Salem Township home. His fellow veterans came from hundreds of miles away, just to remember.

Editorial

When the powers-that-be in Washington said there was no money for a monument, he helped start the National Korean War Memorial Fund to raise $16 million.

As the war continued to recede into an obscure corner of the nation's history, Tony fought back with the only weapon he had left: his memory. Although he had little writing experience, he authored and published a book, "Korea: The War America Forgot to Remember."

Last Tuesday, exactly two weeks shy of the 40th anniversary, Tony's long war ended. He was only 60.

Of the many tributes offered in his memory, none was better than the comment made by fellow Korean veteran Bill Brady of Berwick:

"He made us all aware of ourselves," Brady said, "and gave us our respect and our dignity."

Next Tuesday, think about the millions of men and women who served in Korea. Tell your kids and your grandkids.

When you do, Tony will hear.