The flag is raised at Beverly National Cemetery this morning prior to ceremonies honoring two dead Korean war heroes. Raising the flag are members of Mantua Post 7679 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Veterans honor Korea war dead

By Sari Harrar
Times staff writer

EDGEWATER PARK — War veterans gathered at dawn today in the Beverly National Cemetery to honor two dead Korean War heroes and renew their battle for a national monument to the 54,326 Americans who died in Korea.

"To allow the Korean War to become the forgotten war would be nothing short of an immoral betrayal of the dead," said William Temple, a Korean vet and leader of the effort to build a memorial in Washington, D.C.

A fine mist rose from the long rows of white stone grave markers in the cemetery. As the sun came up, it lit two particular graves, inscribed in gold, that the audience of 30 people had come to honor. They were the graves of Edward C. Benfold and Nelson V. Brittin.

Both men were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for courageous actions in combat. Both men died as a result of their bravery.

"By recalling the deeds and honoring the memory of these two brave Americans, we are symbolically reminding the country of all the Americans who died in Korea," Temple, of Bryn Mawr, Pa., said at the start of the ceremony.

Edward C. Benfold Jr., of Cherry Hill, laid a wreath of burgundy leaves, red carnations and blue ribbon on his father's grave. An honor guard from Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1616 of Wrightstown stood at attention while the veterans in the audience, many in uniform, saluted.

In 1952, Benfold's father was a 21-year-old hospital corpsman with (Continued on Page 12, Col. 1)
An honor guard from Williamstown's VFW Post 1616 stands at attention in Beverly National Cemetery this morning during ceremonies to honor two Korean War heroes who died as a result of their bravery in combat.

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the 1st Marine Division. On a September night, under heavy artillery fire, he repeatedly left shelter to "treat the wounded and lend words of comfort," according to his Medal of Honor citation.

In an attempt to reach two Marines trapped under attack in a crater, Benford grabbed two grenades and rushed forward to meet two North Korean soldiers. He killed the soldiers, saved his comrades and lost his own life, according to the account read during the ceremony.

This morning, Benford's son said he supports the effort to build a monument to his father and the other Korean War dead. "There are a lot of people who died during the war," he said, while standing with his mother, his grandmother and his wife. "They should be remembered."

Otto Gollen, Junior Vice Commander of the VFW in New Jersey, laid a wreath on the grave of Brittin, an Army sergeant who killed 20 enemy soldiers before running into a burst of artillery fire and dying at Yonggang-ni in 1951. He was 31.

"When I hear it said that Korea and Vietnam were not wars but just conflicts and police actions, I get angry," Gollen, a Korean War veteran, told the crowd later. "Put, by God, if one American boy dies on foreign soil, I call it a war."

He called for Congress to authorize the federal American Battle Monuments Commission to plan, raise funds and build a monument.

Temple, the coordinator of the Veterans' Committee for a National Korean War Monument, said plans for a monument have been delayed because of in-fighting between two private organizations.

"We want the federal organization to become the legal entity in charge of the monument," he said. "We'll do whatever it takes to get it. We'll march on Washington if we have to, the way the Vietnam vets did."

Two other veterans who spoke at the half-hour ceremony, retired Air Force Col. John Dramese and Cmdr. Raymond Feinberg of the Jewish War Veterans, also supported the memorial.

"The tragedy is not that (Americans who died in Korea) are gone, but that we fail to remember," said Dramese, who was a prisoner of war in Vietnam for six years.