Korea Vets Let Down--Again

By ERNEST D. FURGURSON

Washington.

In late July, U.S. veterans of a cer-
tain vintage are likely to start rec-
umbering names like Pusan, In-
chon and Wonsan. Millions of young
Americans have never heard of
these places, which is understandable.
What galls us is that so many
men are not old enough to remember
them.

The other day in Seattle, men
who fought in Korea with the 23rd
Infantry Division, 3rd Infantry Di-
vision got together to reminisce.
That was the fun part. When they
started looking at the present and
future, they were not as happy, be-
cause they believe they and their
comrades are still getting the run-
around.

Almost five years ago, Congress
moved construction of a Korean War
Memorial here in Washington,
but commemorates 54,000 Ameri-
cans who died and the hundreds of
thousands who served in the conflict
that ended July 27, 1953. It was a
long, waner gesture, and the cam-
paign to win congressional approval
and raise funds was an emotional
roller coaster for those involved.

The nation had built the Vietnam
memorial, and a decade after that
war was over, the country finally
recognized the sacrifice of those
who died there. But now, nearly 40
years after the truce that ended the
Korean war, the men who fought
and died there still are ignored.

True, there are some Vietnam
veterans, because Americans fought
there in the 1960s, in Korea only
there, but the number of dead was

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been in style, in the '50s
or any other decade.

Nearly every week testifies to the
intensity of the fighting in Korea.
Boils were fought for essen-
tially the same reasons, to prevent
Communist encroachment of a divided na-
tion on the fringe of the great-power
struggle. The Korean effort suc-
ceded. But just as the war of opin-
on over Vietnam was the stylish
cause of the Sixties, finally making
up with the men who fought there
was the thing to do in the Eighties. The
Korean war has never been in style, in
the '50s or any other decade.

When Congress authorized the
memorial, it seemed that at last the
Korean war would be remembered.

After a rocky start, fund-raising
has passed $12 million, thanx to
sale of a common-salve coin. A de-
sign competition was held, a secre-
tar with heroic-size statue of 38
Infantrymen was chosen. That ver-
ion was the good of communism
that review every proposal meant-
ally in the capital and put tentative
support. Then, this summer, the
Fine Arts Commission withdrew its
approval.

The project moved to limbo dur-
ing the 23rd Infantry reunion earlier
this month. One who was there said,
"A number of them think it's all this to
just a conspiracy to submerge the
Korean War Memorial. It's a good
excuse. They've been up and on
and on, and every time it turns out
something good should happen, some-
ing bad happens. A lot of the vet-
ners now say they don't care —
don't expect anything and you won't be
disappointed. A lot are unhappy
and believes the money is just being
flattened away.

All 84 of them at the reunion
agreed a petition to President Bush;
"to seek review on an issue which
gives great pain to our hearts, our
nations and our nation.

"We fought in the Naktong, at
Kumon, at Chipyong-ni, the Punch-
bowl, bloody Hill 67, Hearth-break
Hill, GM friendly, Pork Chop Hill,
T-38, Arrowhead and thousand
ninetens of a country un-
known to us. We were young men.

"We saw life slip away from other
young men, and we have not long-
times. . . . We cannot forget.
"We ask simply that a just and
fitting Korean War Veterans Memo-
ral be built...with no more delay,
some please.

Last Thursday, the review com-
mission met to executive session to
consider the revised designs. Among
those closely involved, hopes were
high, but so was the confidence.

The commission returned to ac-
cept the revision. Now, however,
the matter up to the design competi-
tion will be reconsidered. If it is reject-
ed, the American Battle Monuments
Commission is expected to select de-
signs from a professional artist or ar-
citect. It has asked for a two-year
extension of the five-year authority
which amount construction must
be under way by now.

Meanwhile, another Korean war
anniversary passed yesterday.
Though the veterans of Heartbreak
and Pork Chop have learned never
to expect much, they still were dis-
appointed.

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