

Korean War Veteran

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Fellow Veterans and all of our friends,

The two articles below are the early news responses in Korea to Mr. William Speakman VC JP, donating his medals to the People of Korea. Mr. Speakman spoke graciously to reporters at a news conference arranged by Korea's Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs at the Korean War Memorial in Seoul, under the auspices of MPVA Minister Honourable Park Sung-choon. Mr. Speakman is the president of the recently formed British Korean War Veterans Association. The first article was published today in the Korea Times, Korea's leading English language newspaper. It is circulated to all of the embassies and to major hotels in Seoul and other metropolitan areas as well as to subscribers and newsstand customers. The article below it was prepared and distributed worldwide by Yonhap News Service, Korea's government-owned newswire service.

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British war veteran William Speakman donates Victoria Cross to South Korea



British Korean War veteran William Speakman holds a flower with his eyes closed before laying it in a memorial monument at the War Memorial of Korea in Seoul, Tuesday. Speakman donated 10 medals he received during his 40 years of military service to the Korean government. / *Korea Times* photo by Choi Won-suk

Speakman says he wishes to be buried on hill where he fought

By Jun Ji-hye

An 88-year-old British Korean War veteran donated 10 of his medals, including the Victoria Cross (VC), to South Korea as an expression of his affection for the country he fought for and its people, Tuesday.

The donation from William Speakman, who was a 24-year-old private during the 1950-53 war, comes as he is revisiting here with about 80 veterans and their families at the invitation of the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs.

"I donate my medals to the people in South Korea because what they have done since the war finished has really touched me," Speakman, seating in a wheelchair, told a news conference at the War Memorial of Korea in Yongsan. "They rebuilt South Korea. I am very proud of what you've done."

He expressed hope that the South Korean people remember him by looking at his medals.

The VC is the highest military decoration awarded to members of the armed forces of various Commonwealth countries and previous British Empire territories. Four former soldiers received a VC in appreciation for their distinguished military service during the Korean War. Speakman is the sole survivor among them.

The original VC awarded to Speakman is currently preserved in the War Memorial in Scotland. He donated the re-issued one to South Korea.

Other medals he has donated include a British Korean War Medal and the United Nations Service Medal.

Belonging to the first regiment of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, he first came to Korea in July 4, 1951.

The most memorable battle occurred at 4 a.m. on Nov. 4, 1951, during which he bravely fought with six colleagues by launching grenade attacks on Hill 317 near the Imjin River, which flows down from North Korea. One of his legs was severely injured during this battle.

"We had the hill and wanted to keep it. We were there to do the job and that was it," he said.

Speakman returned to Britain in January the following year due to the injury, but voluntarily came back to Korea after only three months, and continued to fight until Aug. 12, 1952.

He was honorably discharged on Dec. 11, 1968, at the age of 41, when he was a staff sergeant.

The grey-haired veteran is now residing at Royal Chelsea Veterans Hospital in Britain, but he said he wishes to be buried on the Hill 317 after he dies.

"I want to be here. I wish my ashes to be left here," he said, adding that soldiers always think about the battlefield in which they fought for their lives.

He called on North Korea to realize current conditions, so the people from the two

Koreas can live together in the future.

"The younger generation must know what has been happening here," he added.

During their six-day tour that began Monday, Speakman and other veterans are planning to visit the U.N. Memorial Cemetery in the port city of Busan as well as the Demilitarized Zone before departing on Saturday, according to the ministry.

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William Speakman, a Korean War hero from Britain, speaks during a press conference in Seoul on April 21, 2015. (Yonhap)

By Oh Seok-min

SEOUL, April 21 (Yonhap) -- A Korean War hero from Britain expressed hope on Tuesday that South Korea's younger generation will carry on the lofty spirit of

those before them who spared no sacrifice to defend the country and rebuild their war-torn homeland.

William Speakman, one of 51 veterans from the former British Commonwealth, arrived here Monday for a six-day trip. The former soldiers fought against the invading North Korea backed by China during the 1950-53 war.

In a symbolic goodwill gesture, Speakman donated 10 medals he earned during his 23-year military career, including three from his 10-month wartime service in Korea. He was a private affiliated with the First Battalion of the King's Own Scottish Borderers.

"I decided to donate my medals to the people of South Korea, because ... you rebuilt your country and what you've done, it truly touches me," the elderly man said in a press meeting in Seoul.

One of the medals is the Victoria Cross, the highest military decoration awarded for valor to members of the armed forces of Commonwealth countries. Speakman received it from Queen Elizabeth II in 1952.

On November 4, 1951, at the age of 24, Speakman led his party in a series of grenade charges against heavy shell and mortar fire by more than 6,000 Chinese forces in the inter-Korean border town of Yeoncheon. Undaunted by severe wounds to his leg, he led operations to help save the lives of many of his comrades when they were forced to withdraw from their position. Speakman recalled that it was "not out of bravery but that was the way we were trained."

"(The donation) is just to show you about my appreciation about what you've done, and I sincerely hope that the future generation of South Korea will follow their forebears and look after this beautiful place of yours," he said.

Expressing his "sincere hope" that North Korea will realize the repercussions of being divided, he stressed that "the whole world wants to get Korea whole again as a beautiful, peaceful and loving place where people can all live together."

The Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, when North Korean troops, backed by the Soviet Union, invaded the South. The United States and 20 other allied countries fought alongside South Korea under the United Nations flag, while China helped North Korea. It ended in a truce, not a peace treaty, leaving the two Koreas technically in a state of war.

"I want my ashes to be brought back here to stay here in this country that I love and with these people," Speakman said.

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