

Korean War Veteran

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William Speakman VC JP gets back some of hearing lost in Korean War through the generous gift of a Korean businessman

The Korea Times, South Korea's leading English language newspaper that was founded during the Korean War, has published a second article on British Veteran William Speakman VC JP, who is president of the British Korean War Veterans Association and last week returned to Korea where he donated his medals to the Korean People.

A businessman who was present during the ceremonies observed Mr. Speakman asking questions to clarify what reporters had said or asked and concluded the veteran had a serious hearing loss. The businessman was Shin Sangdon, president and CEO of Starkey, Korea, the nation's foremost provider of advanced, high-tech hearing aids.

Mr. Shin arranged for Mr. Speakman to undergo testing and went to his hotel to present him with an advanced set of invisible hearing aids valued at more than \$5,000. So William Speakman VC JP who lost much of his hearing in Korea 64 years ago, returned to the UK this weekend with much of it recovered through the artificial intervention of new technologies, and the compassion of a Korean businessman who has not forgotten his nation's debt to all who served and sacrificed during the Korean War.

Based in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, Starkey Hearing Technologies is the only American-owned hearing aid manufacturer. It is a global company with 21 facilities in 18 nations, including South Korea and the United Kingdom. In the U.S. Starkey is a provider to patients served by the Veterans Administration.

President Ronald Reagan was famously fitted with Starkey hearing aids in 1973, which had a profound effect on increasing public awareness and treatments available for people suffering from hearing loss.

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Starkey Korea donates hearing aid to Korean War veteran

 Listen



Starkey Korea CEO Shim Sang-don, right, poses for a photo with British Korean War veteran William Speakman at the

Lotte Hotel, Seoul, Thursday, after donating the company's newest hearing aid to the 88-year-old who has been hard of hearing. / Courtesy of Starkey Korea

By Jun Ji-hye

Starkey Korea, the nation's leading hearing aid producer, donated a hearing aid worth 6 million won (\$5,600) last week to an 88-year-old British Korean War veteran, William Speakman, the company said Sunday.

Starkey Korea CEO Shim Sang-don gave Speakman the firm's newest invisible hearing aid called SoundLensV at Lotte Hotel, Seoul, Thursday.

"The company decided to give the donation after Speakman was recognized as being hard of hearing during the news conference," Shim said. "I saw him asking about the reporters' questions over and over."

"I am happy to show him my appreciation for visiting Korea again. I hope the hearing aid we gave him will help him," he added, promising to offer continual management.

In response, the gray-haired war veteran was quoted as saying that the hearing difficulties had gone away since wearing the device.

He was also quoted as saying that he was pleased to receive such a great gift and hospitably in Korea, the country he fought for during the 1950-53 war.

Speakman arrived in Korea last Monday with about 80 veterans and their families for a six-day tour at the invitation of the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs.

During his visit, the former soldier, who is currently residing at the Royal Chelsea Veterans Hospital in Britain, donated 10 of his medals, including the Victoria Cross (VC), to Korea as an expression of his affection for the country and its people.

Speakman, then a 24-year-old private during the war, was awarded the VC, the highest military decoration awarded for valor to members of the armed forces of Commonwealth countries, in appreciation of his distinguished military service during the Korean War. He received it from Queen Elizabeth II in 1952.

The most memorable battle occurred at 4 a.m. on Nov. 4, 1951, during which he bravely fought against heavy shelling and mortar fire by more than 6,000 Chinese soldiers 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.

During the news conference Tuesday, Speakman seating in a wheelchair said, "I donated my medals to the people in South Korea because what they have done since the war finished has really touched me. I am very proud of what you've done."

He also said that he wishes to be buried on Hill 317 after he dies.

SoundLensV fits to the unique ear canal shape of each customer. And though tiny, it comes loaded with leading technology, the company said.

In July last year, the firm also donated 100 million won worth of its devices to 16 United Nation's (UN) Korean War veterans who visited Korea to commemorate the 61st anniversary of the Korean War ceasefire agreement.