

# 30 DAYS OF HONOR ★ *A Salute to Local Vets*

## 'We were a big part in making that change'

Edgar's Bill Fergot says war ensured free, prosperous South Korea

**E**DGAR — Billy Fergot served in the Korean War with not one, but two branches of the United States Armed Forces — first the Navy and later the Marines.

Fergot first entered the Navy in 1950 at the age of 18 and went through boot camp and dental tech and medical training.

### ABOUT BILL FERGOT

**Age:** 83  
**Residence:** Edgar  
**Conflict involved in:** Korean War  
**Military branch:** United States Navy and United States Marine Corps  
**Years of service:** 1950 to 1954  
**Rank upon discharge:** Second-class dental technician

After the Korean War broke out and Fergot volunteered for sea duty, he was transferred to Camp Pendleton for Marine Corps infantry combat training and additional field medical training before being shipped to Korea, where he served for a year.

Fergot, 83, was able to visit the memorials for his branches of the service and the Korean War when he took a Never Forgotten Honor Flight in 2012.

**Question: What did you do in the service and where were you stationed?**

**Answer:** I spent most of my time in Korea. We traveled by train, truck and hiked by night. I ended up serving with the Marines and took care of what I was trained to do, which was medical and dental. We had a tented medical facility, but up front was where you took care of casualties first.

**Q: What is your most enduring memory from your time in the service?**

**A:** One time, I took our hospital Jeep to get water, but to get to the water tank you had to cross a river. So I loaded up five gallon cans and went and when I got to the river, I noticed it was higher than usual because it had rained. So when I got out around the middle, the power cut out on the Jeep, leaving me sitting there with no motor. I grabbed my carbine rifle and sat on the hood because water was coming into the jeep. I couldn't swim with all of the gear I had on. Finally, here came a six-wheel troop truck on the other side of the river and they threw me a large rope, we hooked it on, I was dragged out.

**Q: What do you most want people to know about the conflict in which you served?**

**A:** I look at North and South Korea now and see they compare. In North Korea, it's blacked out at



Billy Fergot was photographed at his Edgar home Wednesday.

DAN YOUNG/DAILY HERALD MEDIA



Billy Fergot is shown in his U.S. Navy uniform as he served in the 1950s.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

night and they can't afford to feed their people but South Korea is prosperous and a big trading country. I know we were a big part in making that change. God bless the 36,000 that were killed in that war and all who were wounded in just a three-year period.

**Q: Tell us about your life after the service and how your time in the military affected your civilian life.**

**A:** I got a job with the S.S. Kresge Company. I started at the bottom and moved around a lot, living in probably 12 different states. I was eventually appointed a Kresge store manager and then they became Kmart stores. From there, I went on to be a district manager in Colorado, New Mexico, Missouri and Texas, with something like 16 stores in my district. I then was promoted to a regional office located in southern California where I worked as an operations director before retiring after 33 years with the company.

**Q: What did going on the Honor Flight mean to you?**

**A:** It was a wonderful experience. I was deeply touched seeing all the attractions and memorials, more so the Korean War memorial. It shows a statue of some Marines on patrol in their rain gear, which is much of what went on, and the very last one in line is looking back to see if the enemy is coming. The other factor of the trip is that you're traveling pretty much like you did in the service — just a big bunch of guys all together flying somewhere together.



### A FLIGHT TO NEVER FORGET

» The Central Wisconsin chapter of Never Forgotten Honor Flight celebrated its fifth anniversary this spring. Since April 2010, the Honor Flight program has taken more than 1,700 veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam from Central Wisconsin Airport to Washington, D.C., to view the memorials built in honor of their service.

» 30 Days of Honor is a project of Gannett Central Wisconsin Media to profile veterans who have taken an Honor Flight, or are scheduled, and to encourage more veterans to do so. Profiles will appear each day April 26 through Memorial Day.

» Veterans may apply for a free Honor Flight (or loved ones may apply for them) by filling out an application. The only qualification for a veteran to take an Honor Flight is to have served in any branch of the U.S. military during the periods of World War II, the Korean War or Vietnam War. Veterans do not have to have been in combat. The applications and more information are available at <http://www.neverforgottenhonorflight.org>

### SPONSORED BY

