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Editor
Harlan Daily Enterprise
Harlan KY 40831

Dear Sir:

For the past several years, I have been trying to find out information about a young soldier from Harlan County who served in 2d Platoon, Company K, 31st Inf. Regt., 7th Inf. Division, as a radio operator. With assistance from the Honorable Mitch McConnell I was able to locate the family of Corporal Raymond L. Hatfield.

I had made a pledge that if it was the last thing I do on this earth, it would be to see that Corporal Hatfield gets his just recognition. I witnessed this young man sacrifice his life and perform one of the most unselfish feats of bravery during the Korean war.

Corporal Hatfield was one of my two radio operators. We were hit at exactly one minute after midnight on the morning of March 7, 1953. Corporal Hatfield, following our plan of action in event we were attacked, followed me out of the Command Post bunker with his radio. I was hit and knocked back into him and he helped me get back to my feet. We moved together around to an open observation post where we could observe the enemy. Corporal Hatfield was wounded but he took a position in the open where he could direct fire on the enemy. He was knocked down several times with multiple wounds but continued to expose himself to call in supporting fires instead of seeking cover. He was finally hit by a round that blew off his right arm but he still held his position. Even with his arm missing he still continued to transmit fire directions until he collapsed and died fighting. His action resulted in our position being held and the enemy had to withdraw. Corporal Hatfield gave his life without hesitation for his unit and country.

For his heroic action I recommended Corporal Hatfield for the Congressional Medal of Honor, for which I felt he had earned.

For the past few years I have been trying to determine if any medal was ever awarded. I knew he was not on the Congressional Medal of Honor list but I wanted to make sure he was awarded at least the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously, our country's second highest decoration. I was able to learn from Corporal Hatfield's brother, Carl, who resides in Cumberland, Kentucky that the Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to his brother as a result of my recommendation. Lt. Clemons, The Company Commander, evidently pursued the decoration for Corporal Hatfield for which he was awarded.

I am thankful that Corporal Raymond L. Hatfield was recognized for exceptional bravery and making the supreme sacrifice for his country. Corporal Hatfield was without reservation one of the bravest and finest young soldiers I ever had the pleasure to serve with. The people in Harlan County, Kentucky can be proud of this young man as his comrades and fellow soldiers are, especially those that survived this battle and others fought around the world.

Sincerely,

