Caporal Albert Gagnon places floral tribute at the grave of his brother, Soldat Joseph Omer Gagnon, who fell in July, 1952. He had served with Albert and one other brother in the relatively unknown battle fought by D Company, 2nd
Battalion, the Royal 22e Regiment, in November, 1951, when they were wedged on a small saddle of ground between Hill 355 and Hill 227. Large enemy forces, several battalions, swarmed around them to attack an American unit on Hill 355. Having captured part of that position, the enemy then turned around and came back down the hill to attack D Company. At the same time, enemy forces attacked them from off of Hill 227, where Albert’s platoon was positioned. Every soldier in his platoon was wounded. Twelve of the men in D Company were killed in the action.

Why we turn toward Busan on November 11

Vince Courtenay, Turn Toward Busan program coordinator, places white Chrysanthemum marker beside name of Private Stanley Mudd on United Nations Wall of Remembrance in the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan. Stanley Mudd, from Moosining, Saskatchewan, was killed in action on December 6, 1952 at age 21. With his ambushed platoon enfiladed by machinegun fire from above, Private Mudd moved forward against the enemy while the patrol fell back to safer ground. He was wounded several times and died in the arms of Privates Fred Schooley and Sullivan, who had rushed forward through the hundreds of bullets to rescue him.
After a lapse of two years, the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs of the Republic of Korea once again took up sponsorship of the November 11 Turn Toward Busan remembrance service held in the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan.

The entire week-long program can be defined in the words of one British veteran who attended. Terence Page said that he has been back to Korea a total of ten times on revisits and the Turn Toward Busan program far exceeded in quality and fulfillment any of the other trips he had made back to Korea.

Major General Claude LaFrance, of Canada, said on the very last day of the program that he could think of absolutely no place where the program could possibly be improved.

This article will focus mainly on the solemn aspect of the program, the November 11 Turn Toward Busan Ceremony of Thanks and Remembrance to United Nations Fallen, held at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan.

En route to Busan, via Panmunjom and Hill 355

On November 10, the morning after their arrival, the delegation of 23 veterans and family members from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom went by bus to Panmunjom, along the DMZ. They then traveled to Outpost Sang Seung, overlooking historic Hill 355, “Little Gibraltar.”

It is a position most Commonwealth units served on, or near. It is the position where a quarter of Canada's Korean War Fallen lost their lives.

There was a civilian paramilitary band in scarlet tunics playing for the veterans when they arrived and when they departed. The band played military music of the Commonwealth nations!

Every veteran was guided up and down the steps to the OP by a couple of serving ROK soldiers. Yes, the veterans are in their 80’s, or almost there, and one is in his 90’s, and the respectful aid was appreciated.

After luncheon at a Korean restaurant the delegates took the KTX high speed train to Busan and checked in at the Novotel Ambassador Hotel, situated along the beautiful Haeundae Beach gold coast, next door to the Paradise Beach Hotel and Casino.

The evening was left open for relaxing dinner and walks along the beach. The dining room featured a wonderful buffet and bottomless wine and beer service was included in the dinner. Some of the veterans, partook of the latter – but with
gentlemanly decorum. A couple closed the dining room, also with gentlemanly decorum.

**November 11 Turn Toward Busan program and service**

After a leisurely breakfast on November 11 everyone departed by bus for the United Nations Memorial Cemetery. Everyone was turned out smartly. Veterans had their full medals and wore association or service blazers. There was a spit of rain, but not enough to don the provided plastic coats. It came and went as a cold mist but soon a calm gray sky prevailed. It was fitting, somehow, for the morning was not a joyous one.

The veterans were greeted by Canadian Leo Demay, the director of international affairs at the Cemetery. Leo’s father, Soldat Andre Regimbald, is one of the 378 Canadians who are buried there. The veterans then went to the graves of friends who had fallen, or to the graves of family members, and they placed flowers and prayed and saluted.

From Canada, Major General Herbert Pitts and Commodore James Cumming both went to the grave of Lieutenant Arthur Herman and placed a flower, spoke their words of respect and saluted the fallen soldier. Lieutenant Herman had been their classmate at Royal Roads Military College in Victoria, but had finished his education at a public university. He had been commissioned in the Royal 22e Regiment and was killed in action on Hill 355 in August, 1952.
Commodore James Cumming (left) and Major General Herbert Pitts, MC, CD, place flower on grave marker of Lieutenant Arthur Herman.
Two of the Canadian veterans placed floral arrangements at the graves of their brothers.
Caporal Albert Gagnon, tearfully, respectfully, solemnly located the grave of his brother, Joseph Omer Gagnon. He spent some time there and before leaving, gave the spirit of his good brother a final salute.

Albert, Joseph, and another brother had all served together in D Company of the 2nd Battalion, R22eR in November, 1951, when it fought for five days and nights surrounded, on a saddle of land between Hill 355 and Hill 227. It was probably the
fiercest action of the war for any Canadian company, but for some reason went unsung.
Four of the Gagnon brothers had served in Korea in the R22eR.

Robert Erb of Kingston also placed flowers for his brother, Kenneth, who had been killed in action serving with The Royal Canadian Regiment, in March, 1952. Robert had retired as a warrant officer after serving for many years in the Canadian Army.
Lieutenant General Charles Belzile of Canada also located the graves of friends he had served with. One of those soldiers was the very well known Lieutenant Milton Vipond, who had been killed in a fire that destroyed his quarters.
Commodore Cumming of Canada also went to the Commonwealth Monument to Those With No Known Graves. There he saluted the plaque that bears the names of five Royal Canadian Navy sailors who were lost at sea. Their names had been overlooked for quarter of a century and were added to the Monument just last year.
Veteran John Simmons from Australia was present as coordinator of the Australian contingent. John served in the Royal Australian Navy in Korean waters during all three years of the Korean War. Below and to his right side is the Commonwealth Monument to Those With No Known Graves. John has been to the UN Memorial Cemetery many times. It has always been a most solemn experience for him. John was planning to stay on in Korea following the program. He was making arrangement to visit Republic of Korea war veterans in the Seoul veterans hospital that is operated by the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs.
Major General Claude LaFrance, DFC, AM, Legion d’honneur, served in Korea as a Royal Canadian Air Force exchange fighter pilot with the USAF. He visited his old Fighter Wing in Osan, Korea, the day before the service. He placed flowers on graves of soldiers prior to the beginning of the morning service.
Veteran Lewis Carkeek, who spent three years in Korea during the war, placed the official wreath of remembrance for New Zealand at the United Nations Memorial Wall. He was accompanied by a representative of the New Zealand Embassy.
Colonel John Richard Church, DSO and his wife, Nola Church, look at the grave marker of one of Colonel Church's fallen comrades. Colonel Church had served in Korea with the Royal Australian Regiment.
John David Hohepa Shortland and his wife, Marilyn Ann Shortland, located the grave of John's father, Lance Bombardier Joseph Shortland, who was killed in action serving with the 16th New Zealand Field Regiment on February 13, 1953. John held a private rite at his father's grave while fellow New Zealander Lewis Carkeek looked on respectfully.

The veterans and their family members had two hours to visit the gravesites and also to look at the monuments and visit the memorial buildings before the service began precisely at 10:55 a.m. There was a salute to the Taegeukgi, the Flag of the Republic of Korea, while the band played the Aegukga, the Korean national anthem. Master of Ceremonies, Leo Demay, of the UN Cemetery staff, then asked for two minutes of silence – precisely at 11 a.m.
At this time, more than 6,000 miles away in Ottawa, Canada, where it was 9 p.m. on November 10, a large delegation had turned their faces toward Busan and also were holding the two minutes of silence.

In Canada, the delegation was headed by Steven Blaney, Canada’s Minister of Veterans Affairs, with Bill Black, president of the KVA Canada national capital unit officiating.

In attendance was the Republic of Korea’s Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency, Joo Hung Nam.

Following the two minutes of silence in Ottawa, Minister Blaney spoke eloquently in commemoration of Canadians who fell and all who served in Korea:

“This evening we honour the more than 26,000 courageous Canadian men and women who served in the Korean War, of whom 516 bravely gave their lives to defend our way of life.

“They served our country with pride and conviction. We will never forget their service and their sacrifice in making our world a safer place.

“Fifty-eight years after the signing of the Armistice, we remain firmly committed to remembering and recognizing the shared history that unites our two great countries.

“Most of all, we are proud to stand together and pay tribute to our nation’s truest heroes.”
Canada’s Veterans Affairs Minister Steven Blaney places first wreath at altar within the Ottawa City Hall in Canada’s official national Turn Toward Busan service, held on November 10 at 9 p.m., exactly synchronized with the November 11 service in Korea. The service is held indoors now as the temperatures in Ottawa are quite cold at night and all of the veterans are in their 80’s and 90’s. His Excellency Joo Hung Nam, the Republic of Korea's Ambassador to Canada is second from left, his head bowed, beside his defence attache.

In Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, veterans and veterans groups in various communities were joining in with the Turn Toward Busan gesture by facing toward Busan and holding a minute or two of silence, specially for those who fell in Korea - whom they never want to be forgotten.

Leo Lemay, director of international operations for the United Nations Memorial Cemetery, officiated as moderator of the program. He spoke in English and his translator assistant repeated his words in Korean.

In the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan, veteran Vince Courtenay was asked to report on the global Turn Toward Busan services, in which veterans from the Commonwealth nations voluntarily turn their faces respectfully to their Fallen comrades who are buried in Korea.
He did this, but also said that his friend, Sergeant William Speakman, Victoria Cross, had very recently said that as his final wish, he would like his ashes to be brought to Korea and scattered in the hills where he served. Courtenay said this shows the enormous respect this great soldier has for the Republic of Korea and the Korean people and their achievements, and also the significance of the Korean War to his life – which also saw him serving in many other theatres after Korea with Britain's Special Air Service. Courtenay told everyone how Major General Herbert Pitts from Canada had held Private Wensel Batsch in his arms after Batsch and Corporal Francis Mullins had triggered a land mine. They were on a night wiring party patrol only a few dozen meters from the enemy position. Mullin had been killed outright and Batsch died in minutes; a single piece of shrapnel having pierced his heart. Pitts was awarded the Military Cross for bravery and wears it proudly in memory of those two fallen soldiers, Courtenay noted. He earlier had visited both of their graves. Courtenay concluded by telling the 200 ROK veterans, military cadets and students that the Fallen soldiers buried nearby would be so enormously proud of all Koreans
for the way they had energetically built up the country and made it one of the world’s leading economies.
He added that they would all be proud and take solace that no child in Korea goes hungry, no child goes without love, or without a good education.
Honourable Park Sung Choon, Minister of Patriots and Veterans Affairs of the Republic of Korea spoke twice, once at the UN Cemetery and again in a follow-on reception banquet for the veterans.
We are proud, indeed, to present a translation of Minister Park’s very heartfelt speech, that he delivered in the Korean language, with interpretations made for English speakers.
Honorable UN Korean War Veterans and bereaved family members, thank you for making the trip to Korea from all the way out and welcome all of you.

Let me begin by thanking all of you taking time to join us on this meaningful occasion.

Sixty-one years have passed since the Korean War broke out.

Today, on behalf of the Korean government, I would like to commemorate those who gave their lives during the war and also express my most sincere condolences and sympathy for the bereaved family members who have long suffered from the loss of beloved ones.

More than half a century later after the signing of the armistice agreement, the valor and indomitable spirit of the Korean War Veterans are still immortalized in our minds.

Facing the overpowering enemy forces intent on total destruction, ROK forces fought bravely to serve their nation.

Despite the odds being stacked against us, we remained resilient because of the UN forces, who willingly put themselves in harm's way for a distant nation and a unknown people in the name of friendship and alliance.

Their devotion and commitment gave us a ray of hope and helped us rise from the war-afflicted devastation.

Amidst thunderous, roaring sounds of tanks and artillery, ROK army and UN forces steadfastly advanced while unwaveringly overcoming adversity and biting cold of winters.

In the process, you often found yourselves holding back helpless feelings when you witnessed the death and suffering of your comrades.

I know that the war left some of you still struggling with unbearable scars and indelible nightmarish memories.

Your indomitable sacrifices gave us strength and a means to protect ourselves in times of fear and desperation.

We Koreans shall never forget your contributions and an important lesson that you delivered: "Freedom is not free."

Ladies and gentlemen!

_We firmly assure you that the noble sacrifices of the Korean War Veterans will never be forgotten!_
We Koreans will make every effort to impart the cherished values of peace and freedom to our descendants; to the younger generations.

To realize our promise, the Korean government has hosted appreciation events in 21 UN allied nations.

In addition, the Peace Camps for Youth have helped the young participants better understand the legacy of their grandfathers who dedicated themselves to safeguarding peace and freedom.

Your unwavering faith and devotion have laid the foundation for what Korea is today.

To further live up to your expectations, in the forthcoming years, we shall continuously work on spreading the noble spirit and commitment of the UN Korean War Veterans.

To attain this vision, the Republic of Korea will cooperate closely with the UN allied nations in order to prevent the chances of another similar tragedy from happening ever again.

In this endeavor, we shall make concerted efforts together to accomplish mutual benefits and common prosperity of all mankind.

By doing so, I believe we can carry on the noble spirits of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for the defense of a distant, far away land that most of you had never even heard of before.

Therefore, I sincerely ask each of you present here today to remember those who put themselves in harm’s way for peace and freedom of the Republic of Korea.

My prayers are with all the fallen soldiers. May they rest in the eternal peace and let us always remember them.

Amen!

Park Sung Choon
Minister of MPVA, Republic of Korea
A look at the face of British veteran Terence Page tells of his solemn feelings as he sets out to find the grave of a fallen comrade and place the traditional Korean Chrysanthemum flower of respect and mourning. A big man, this very pleasant
British veteran also exhibits an even bigger heart, which made him most affable company to delegates from all of the nations. One hopes the spirits of those whose graves he visited also rejoiced in his good company.

Australian Veteran Richard Hetherington and his wife, Susan, place flowers on the grave marker of a fallen comrade.
Edward “Gus” Breen, who commanded a platoon with the Royal Australian Regiment in Korea and also flew as an observer with the US Air Force Mosquito Squadron, places a flower on grave marker of a fallen comrade. Gus Breen first joined the RAR on the Hill 355 position. After that he served with the US Air Force, where he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal. His plane cracked up on takeoff on one mission and his heroics helped save the pilot. Like all of the delegates, a gentleman through and through.
The veterans later that day were Minister Park Sung Choon’s guests of honour at a banquet luncheon following the morning services at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery.

At that time, Lieutenant General Charles Belzile, former commander of the Canadian Army, gave a toast, thanking the Minister and his Ministry, saluting all veterans present, and paying great respect to those who fell.

Lieutenant General Charles H. Belzile, CM, CMM, OStJ, CD, former commander of the Canadian Army, prepares to give toast as representative of all Commonwealth veterans during the welcoming banquet that followed the services at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery.
It is noteworthy that another distinguished Korean will visit the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan later this month, to pay homage to all of those buried there, who fell serving under their Flags and that of the United Nations.

His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, will travel to the United Nations Memorial Cemetery at the end of the month, specifically to honour the Fallen from the 11 United Nations allies who are buried there, and all who served in defence of the Republic of Korea.

*They will not be forgotten!*