

HONORING THOMAS HUDNER AND
THE HEROES OF THE KOREAN
WAR

HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the brave men who fought to preserve the ideals of liberty and freedom from oppression that threatened to engulf the entire Korean peninsula back in the summer of 1950. On Sunday, July 27, 2003, in the town of Abington, Massachusetts, veterans of the Korean War, their families and fellow citizens will gather to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of what is often called "The Forgotten War." But in truth it was anything but. The fighting, death and destruction was no illusion but a cold hard fact. Over 50,000 Americans were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Our allies, the South Koreans, and the other countries that fought with us under the umbrella of the United Nations, also suffered. From the Pusan Perimeter and Incheon to the Chosin Reservoir and Pork Chop Hill, so many of our husbands, fathers, sons and brothers made the ultimate sacrifice to en-

sure that Koreans can have the same advantages and freedoms we enjoy here at home.

Representative of the sacrifices of this group of heroes is Congressional Medal of Honor recipient and former Massachusetts Commissioner of Veterans Services, Thomas Hudner. Born in Fall River, Massachusetts in 1924, Mr. Hudner attended the prestigious Phillips Academy and then enrolled in the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. Trained to be a Naval Aviator, Lieutenant (jg) Hudner received orders to go to Korea, where his ship, the USS *Leyte*, arrived in October of 1950. Though enemy naval units were not a major threat, providing support to U.N. ground forces was still dangerous.

The character and mettle of the man was fully revealed on December 4, 1950, when on a mission, the aircraft flown by Ensign Jesse Brown went down in the mountains of North Korea. After confirming that Ensign Brown initially survived the crash, the flight leader radioed for assistance and the Marines dispatched a helicopter. Fearing that the fire now enveloping his friend's plane—or the enemy that was in the area—would reach him first, Lieutenant Hudner, at the risk of his own life, performed a wheels up crash landing of his aircraft and tried to rescue Ensign Brown. The hope was that both could then escape the

area aboard the arriving helicopter. Fighting against snow, sub-zero temperatures and enemy forces, Hudner tried to put out the fire and save his comrade. Unfortunately, the injuries suffered by Brown were fatal. For his bravery and courage Thomas Hudner was decorated with the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Truman in 1951.

After the war, Thomas Hudner continued his military career in the Navy until his retirement in 1973. He continued to live and work in the Boston area. Like others of his generation, when our country needed them, they answered the call. They did their duty, saved and preserved the freedoms we cherish today and returned home to raise their own families during one of America's greatest eras of prosperity. Their legacy is the peace, security and opportunity of today's America. It is a gift so precious we can never repay them except by promising each other to never forget and always remain vigilant. It has been 50 years since the guns fell silent across the cease fire line in Korea. The passing of time has thinned their ranks, but the memories of their deeds in fighting for the liberty we enjoy today will never fade. God bless the men of the Korean War generation, their families and the United States of America.