

Military Policeman

William Clyde Fowler of Mullins was a member of Clemson's Class of 1952. We know little of his Clemson career. Born in 1927, Fowler was too young to be called to military service during World War II like his older brother, Gordon, but Fowler enlisted in the Army in November 1950 after war had broken out in Korea the previous June.



The Korean War was a back-and-forth conflict. It started with the surprise attack by North Korean forces on June 25, 1950. Two days after the invasion, the United Nations authorized member states to provide military assistance to South Korea. The following day, North Korean troops captured Seoul, the South Korean capital. South Korean and American forces were pushed back all the way to the southeastern tip of the Korean peninsula. There the beleaguered allies formed a perimeter around the port city of Pusan and dug in to await reinforcements from American occupation troops in Japan and the United Nations.

September was a pivotal month in the conflict. On the 12th, North Korean forces reached their farthest point of advance, but their success diminished their strength and their supply lines had become lengthy and vulnerable. On September 15, UN forces, led by the American X Corps, landed at Inchon on Korea's west coast 150 miles behind enemy lines. The amphibious thrust threatened to cut off North Korean forces in the south and ten days later, Seoul was liberated.

In late October, UN troops, having destroyed the bulk of the North Korean army, advanced through North Korea and approached the Yalu River, North Korea's frontier with China. At this point, UN supplies lines were becoming extended. The mission of the 772nd Military Police Battalion was to secure the rail lines carrying supply trains to the north—and returning wounded soldiers to the south. Private Fowler was a military policeman in the 772nd's Company A.

A full-scale intervention by Chinese forces in November took the United Nations by surprise. Confronted with vastly superior numbers, American and allied units fell back in a fighting retreat. While suffering high casualties, the Chinese pushed UN troops out of North Korea and on January 5, 1951, recaptured Seoul.

On January 30, Private Fowler was a member of a patrol securing one of the main supply routes to the front. The vehicle in which he was riding was ambushed by enemy soldiers and Fowler and three comrades were killed. According to a letter to Fowler's parents from his battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Barton, "Clyde was liked by all of his associates. He was an excellent soldier, performing all tasks assigned to him in a cheerful and efficient manner." A memorial service for Fowler was held on February 4 and he was interred in the United Nations Cemetery in Korea.

Private Fowler was awarded the Purple Heart, Korean Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Korean Presidential Unit Citation, and Republic of

Korea War Service Medal. He was survived by his parents, four sisters, and three brothers. His body was later returned to Mullins where it was reinterred in the Cedardale Cemetery.

