

Name: **Ottis C. Teston**

Branch of Service:

Army

Years of Military Service:

4 years, 10 months

Rank upon discharge:

Sergeant First Class

Specialties:

Infantry Rifleman

Foreign countries where veteran was stationed:

Fought in Korea; stationed in US

Medals/Honors Received:

Purple Heart, Good Conduct, Ex-Prisoner of War

Highlights of Military Service:

Sgt. Teston began combat duty in Korea in August of 1950. Sgt. Teston was with a group of 8 other soldiers from his unit at an outpost 11 kilometers from the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. On 11-25-50, the unit was battling an increasing number of Chinese soldiers. A firefight ensued on the morning of 11-27-50, and one man was killed in action while another was wounded. A fellow soldier threw a grenade in an attempt to stave off the attacking Chinese soldiers. The resulting grenade flash temporarily blinded Sgt. Teston. As he fought to regain his sight, the remaining unit members fled down a hill to evade the attacking Chinese soldiers. Sgt. Teston regained his sight just as Chinese soldiers were quickly surrounding him and taking him prisoner. The remaining members of his unit were also captured by the Chinese the following day.

Sgt. Teston was in a total of 3 different Prisoner of War camps for 33 months. The first camp was a makeshift facility consisting of mud and grass huts. The temperatures were cold as this was winter (a reported 68 degrees below zero at one time.) In an attempt to warm himself and his fellow prisoners, Sgt. Teston scavenged a door from a nearby farmhouse. His intent was to burn the door for warmth. He was caught with the door by his Chinese captors. Sgt. Teston was forced to hold the door above his head for hours in the freezing cold. As a result, he suffered severe frostbite to his extremities and ultimately lost a portion of one toe.

Sgt. Teston and his fellow prisoners were subjected to attempted indoctrination by the Chinese. Daily lessons in Communist teachings were common with the eventual separation of enlisted men from officers as the Chinese believed they could break the will of the enlisted men easily if they did not have their commanding officers present. Illness and death was ever present in the camps. At the time of his release on 08-31-53, Sgt. Teston and one other soldier were the only survivors of the 8 men from his unit originally sent to the outpost. Sgt. Teston returned to the US aboard a ship on which he was debriefed after his long ordeal. Upon his return to the US, he was discharged from the service.

Why do you believe it is important for young people to register and vote?

According to Sgt. Teston: "We have to participate in our system to control our government. It is a privilege we have and our country is founded on this principle. It has to be this way. We need to have a voice in our government. This is what soldiers died for-so that we could have the form of government we have."