**Blinded in Korea**

**As Told by Alfred Camp**

**Written by Debbie Williams, 2009**

On September 13, 1949, Alfred Camp joined the United States Army.  After serving his country eight months, he received the orders that he would be serving in Japan for two years for overseas occupational duty.  While on the ship to Japan and one day shy of his arrival, war broke out in Korea.  The orders drastically changed and so did the life of Alfred Camp.

Camp was sent straight to the front lines of Korea.  For six months, he was a machine gunner on the front lines just six miles from the Manchurian border.

On New Year’s Eve in 1950, it was well below freezing and six inches of snow had already fallen to the ground.  Around 9:00 pm, while in a foxhole and firing his machine gun, Camp was hit by shrapnel from a round of mortar shells.  He was wounded in both eyes, his right arm, and in his stomach.  His vision was blurred to the point that Camp was able to recognize outlines only.

In severe pain and with fragments of shrapnel embedded in his body, Camp continued to fight on into the night until the battle had subsided.  Early the next morning, Camp made his way over to the company’s commanding office to let them know he had been wounded and needed to get to the Aid Station.  It was at this time that Camp was told that the aid station had been moved, that they were surrounded by the enemy and needed to get out the best they could.

While they all were trying to get to safety, they happened upon soldiers fighting a battle.  The machine gunner had been killed.  Camp was asked if he was able to fire the machine gun.  Camp said that he could not see the enemy, but he could hear them. So the gun was pointed in the direction of the enemy and Camp began firing.

In a matter of minutes, a round of mortar exploded over the foxhole that Camp was defending.  The force of the explosion of mortar knocked Camp to the ground.  He was wounded again in both eyes and just above his heart.  This time, his wounds left him in total darkness.  In less than 24 hours, Camp was wounded twice in his eyes.  The first time, his vision was blurred; the second time resulted in total blindness.

In fear of being captured by the enemy, Camp vehemently prayed for God’s mercy.  He prayed that God would intervene by either allowing him to escape or let him die.  Minutes later, Camp heard someone walking nearby.  He could hear soldiers beg the man for help.  Camp also asked the man for help.  Camp convinced the man that he could hold on to his coat.  The man led Camp to safety and to aid.  Due to the severity of Camp’s wounds, he was flown to Japan.

At the end of January, Camp was sent back to the United States to an Army Hospital.  It was there that Camp was told that without God’s intervention, he would never see again.

In January of 1952, Camp was awarded the Silver Star, which is the third highest military decoration that can be awarded to a member of any branch of the Armed Forces.  Earlier, he had been awarded the Purple Heart for being wounded in battle.

Currently, at the age of 80, Alfred Camp is a retired piano tuner.  He is very active in his community.  He is the President of the Stephens County Georgia Council of the Blind.  Camp also plays music along with his band for five different nursing homes.  He is married to Cora, his wife of 56 years.  They have two daughters, five grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

**Alfred Camp**

1928 ~ 2012

Alfred William Camp, age 83, of Toccoa passed away, Wednesday, May 9, 2012 at Tranquility Hospice in Austell.

Born August 31, 1928 in Toccoa, he was a son of the late John Earl and Florence Thomas Camp. He was a member of the Church of God (AWA), and was a self-employed piano technician and worked for Lovell Piano Company for several years. Mr. Camp was a former President of the Stephens County Chapter of the GA Council OF the Blind for many years. Alfred and his band, Al Camp and the Night Owls, played for seven Nursing Homes for over 40 years. The last time he played was March 5, 2012 at the Royston Nursing Home. Mr. Camp was a U. S. Army Korean War Veteran where he lost his sight during the conflict, receiving the Silver Star and the Purple Heart.

Family members include his wife, Cora Bryson Camp; daughters and sons-in-law, Dolores and David Rutenber, and Debra and Jeffery Williams; grandchildren,

Michael Williams, Leah and Shane Lawson, Joshua Williams, Jason Williams, and Jennifer Rutenber; great-grandchildren, Dayana Rutenber, Blake Williams,

Kayleigh Williams, and Lillian Williams; brothers, Wallace Camp, Lawrence Camp, and Ben Camp; sisters, Betty Camp, Jane Payne and Rosa Farah.

He was preceded in death by a son, Russell Camp; two brothers and two sisters.

Funeral services will be held at three o'clock Saturday, May 12, 2012 at the Chapel of Whitlock Mortuary with the Pastor Bruce Gore officiating.

Burial will follow at Stephens Memorial Gardens.

The family will receive friends at the mortuary from 2-4 and 6-8 Friday.

Whitlock Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

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