Corporal Alva P. Hilscher

Hometown: Belleville, Illinois
Entered Service: July 23, 1948
Unit: 1st Marine Division, 1st Shore Party Battalion, Company B
Rank: Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps
Cemetery: Site 2555, Section I
Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery
St. Louis, Missouri

February 16, 1931 - May 11, 1981
Before the War

On February 16, 1931, Alva Paul Hilscher was born in Leavenworth County, Kansas to Herman and Carolyn Hilscher. He had an older brother, Herman, Jr. According to the 1930 census, Herman Hilscher, Sr. worked as a carpenter at a machine manufacturing company.

Herman and Carolyn divorced at some point after Alva’s birth. According to the 1940 federal census, Alva and Herman, Jr. lived with their father and his new wife, Virginia F. Hilscher. Herman, Sr. was now employed by the federal government as a carpenter at a military base (most likely at Fort Leavenworth).

At age 17, Alva petitioned to join the U.S. Marine Corps. His mother, Carolyn Hilscher McCasland (she was remarried at this time) gave permission for him to enlist underage. He indicated two years experience as a farm hand as well as experience operating a donut fryer.
Military Experience

Hilscher enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on July 23, 1948 and arrived at Parris Island, South Carolina, on July 25. His service took him to various places, including training exercises in Puerto Rico and Cuba in February and March 1949.

As tension escalated in Korea, he sailed on the USS General H.W. Butner from San Diego to Japan, arriving on August 29, 1950 and then aboard LST Q-036 from Kobe, Japan to Korea. He arrived in Korea on September 15, 1950 with the 1st Marine Division, 1st Shore Party Battalion, Company B.

Hilscher’s primary job in the Marines was to work as a Shore Party Man. He marked beaches, unloaded ships, controlled traffic, removed mines, set up communications, established dump and supply points, and engaged in reconnaissance missions. The 1st Shore Party Battalion moved cargo inland to support Marines as they advanced.

Hilscher’s unit participated in the Incheon landings, the assault and seizure of Seoul, and the Wonsan-Hungnam-Chosin Campaign. He served in Korea from September 15, 1950 to September 11, 1951. He was hospitalized for part of his deployment in November and December 1950.

He returned to San Francisco on the USS Menald, sailing from Kobe, Japan, on November 25, 1951.
Veteran Experience


Hilscher died of cancer on May 11, 1981. His widow moved to Virginia Beach to live with their eldest daughter, Patricia, until her death on November 11, 2016.

Commemoration

Alva Paul Hilscher, Sr. was laid to rest in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis County, Missouri.

Alva Paul Hilscher, Sr.’s grave at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.Courtesy of Lynne O’Hara.
Bibliography

1st Marine Division, Korea; General Administrative Files, September 1950-March 1955, Record Group 127 (Box 226); National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.


Alva P. Hilscher, Official Military Personnel File, Department of the Navy. U.S. Marine Corps, Record of the U.S. Marine Corps, RG 127, National Archives and Records Administration - St. Louis.


Hilscher, Patricia. E-mail message to author. September 24, 2018.


