



James Lyles was born in Blaney, South Carolina in 1930. His father was a farmer who fought in France during World War I with the U.S. Army. His mother raised 11 children in a four bedroom house and his brother served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. James enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1950 and was assigned to the first integrated training unit at Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina. Upon finishing initial training he traveled first to California, then Japan and finally

arrived in Pusan, South Korea in February of 1951. He was assigned to the 24th Infantry Regiment which as part the 25th Infantry Division in MacArthur's 8th Army. James immediately saw action as the NATO allied forces were pushing the North Koreans and Chinese back north toward the 38th Parallel. James was assigned to G Company, 4th Squad, a weapons team, employing the 57 Caliber Mortar Launcher, 50 Caliber Machine Gun and Bazooka. James's regiment was integral in the pushing the enemy back north of the 38th Parallel where he saw heavy action and unfortunately many casualties in places such as Pork Chop Hill and the Kumhwa Valley. During this campaign, the presidential order to integrate the U.S. Army deactivated his regiment and James was reassigned and continued to fight within an integrated unit as one of the few African American soldiers. For his actions, Corporal Lyles was awarded two Bronze Stars, the Combat Infantry Badge and the Korean Service Medal. Eventually returning to the United States after a year of combat action, James was discharged from the Army. Two months later as jobs where scarce, he enlisted again for another 3 years. He was assigned to Fort Gordon as a cook and unfortunately was back to a mostly segregated military force. In 1957 he was discharged and returned to civilian life. James made his way to Connecticut and finally Stamford where he opened up his own business, JL Record Shop, on West Main Street. He successfully ran his business for 27 years and then worked for Enterprise Rent-A-Car until he retired. James married his wife Emma in 1959 and had 4 children. All are graduates of the Stamford Public School system and son West and daughter Linda still live in Stamford. Marjorie his eldest lives in South Caroline and his youngest Marjorie, served 23 years and retired from the U.S. Navy. James has been a singer his entire life, singing blues and gospel with bands such as the Heavenly Travelers and the choir at Faith Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church on Grove Street. James as been recognized for his military service by the Knights of Columbus, Stamford Senior Center and the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks. He was an honored veteran at a Stamford Citizen of the Year Ceremony where a scholarship was awarded in his name. The City of Stamford is proud or James' service and he is deserving the Grand Marshal of the 2022 Stamford Memorial Day Parade. Learn more about James Lyles at [www.vfw9617.org](http://www.vfw9617.org).

