



NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN MEMORIAL
FOUNDATION

njamf.com

Our Story. Your Rights.

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NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

MISSION

The National Japanese American Memorial Foundation (NJAMF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to education and public awareness about the internment of Japanese Americans by the U.S. government during World War II. NJAMF believes that our nation is strengthened by its diversity, and that constitutional rights must be cherished, guarded and upheld regardless of race, religion or ethnicity.

HISTORY

In the months following the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which ordered Americans of Japanese ancestry to be evacuated from their homes and businesses on the West Coast to desolate internment camps where they would remain until the end of the war. Despite these injustices more than 30,000 Japanese Americans volunteered for military service while their families remained interned at home.

More than 45 years after the internment began, Congress and the president of the United States formally apologized for the internment by enacting the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-383). Through this unprecedented legislation, Congress admitted the nation's error in imprisoning Japanese Americans and offered redress to survivors.

THE MEMORIAL

Following the Civil Liberties Act, the Go For Broke National Veterans Association (to later become the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation) organized the effort to secure a national memorial on federal land. In 1992, President George H.W. Bush authorized construction of a memorial to, "Commemorate the experience of American citizens of Japanese ancestry and their parents who patriotically supported this country despite their unjust treatment during World War II."

NJAMF raised \$13 million to build the National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II, and in 2000 the Memorial was dedicated. Ownership of the Memorial was transferred to the United States Government in 2002, and the National Park Service is responsible for the maintenance of the Memorial today.

EDUCATION

Today the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation strives to promote the history and legacy of the National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism as an American story, to remind Americans that what happened to Japanese Americans during World War II must not happen again to any other group, regardless of race, religion or national origin, and to remind the American people that great nations can also admit and redress great mistakes.

NJAMF works to educate and raise public awareness about the Japanese American experience during WW II through various events, outreach programs and publications. The Japanese American experience is relevant today because it is a reminder of the fragility of the U.S. Constitution and how we must vigilantly guard our constitutional rights.

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FACTS

120,000 Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes and interned in detention camps during World War II after President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066.

More than **30,000** Japanese American men and women volunteered to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II, including **4,000** from the internment.

800 soldiers gave their lives while fighting for freedom. These soldiers' names are engraved on the memorial.

32% of those surveyed in a study conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. said they were either unsure or denied that the internment took place.

20,000 donors contributed to the building of the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II.

NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN MEMORIAL TO PATRIOTISM DURING WW II TIMELINE

February 19, 1942

President Franklin D. Roosevelt issues Executive Order 9066

August 10, 1988

President Ronald Reagan signs American Civil Liberties Act

October 9, 1990

The first redress payments are made to Japanese Americans

October 24, 1992

President George H.W. Bush signs into law Federal Statute PL 102-502 enabling a Japanese American memorial to be built in the Nation's Capital

October 22, 1999

Groundbreaking at site of the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During WW II at the edge of Capitol Hill

November 9, 2000

The National Japanese American Memorial is dedicated

June 29, 2001

Completion of the Memorial is celebrated

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“Here we admit a wrong. Here we affirm our commitment as a nation to equal justice under the law.”

—President Ronald W. Reagan, upon signing the Civil Liberties Act of 1988

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The National Japanese American Memorial Foundation (NJAMF) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to education and public awareness about the Japanese American internment during World War II. The Memorial is not only a monument to the Japanese American experience, but also a reminder that we must not allow this to happen to any group again.

A PATRIOTIC MEMORIAL

Seventy-three days after the outbreak of World War II, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which changed the lives of Americans of Japanese origin forever. Under this order 120,000 men, women and children – regarded individually and collectively as potential security risks, but without receiving a trial or other due process – were moved by the United States government under military guard from homes, schools and businesses into 10 desolate, barbed-wire internment camps in some of the more isolated corners of the nation.

The names of the camps and the number confined in each, are engraved on the walls of the National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During WWII to recall the injustice of the times. The narrative and historical quotations etched into stone provide an insight into the period when prejudices and war hysteria allowed a grave violation of Constitutional rights to happen. They also commemorate the faith and courage of a people who endured discrimination and demonstrated a stirring loyalty to principles on which this nation was founded.

The memorial, authorized by Congress in 1992 to be constructed on Federal land, and completed in 2001, acknowledges the nation’s error in discriminating against citizens on the basis of their ethnic roots. Further, it is a triumphal statement of loyalty by citizens who never lost faith in America.

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A VETERAN'S MEMORIAL

Even as their families remained imprisoned at home, more than 30,000 Japanese American men and women served in the U.S. Armed Forces to fight for freedom overseas. The combined, racially segregated unit comprising the 100th Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team serving in Europe was cited as the most highly decorated Army unit in U.S. history for its size and length of service. Japanese Americans in the Military Intelligence Service utilized their bilingual skills to shorten the war and save countless lives in the Pacific fronts – a fact that was also closely-held national secret for decades following the war.

The names of more than 800 of these men who gave their lives in the nation's service are engraved on the Memorial in tribute to their sacrifice. In a White House ceremony welcoming Japanese American troops home, President Harry S. Truman said, "You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice—and you won. Keep up that fight, and we will continue to win—to make this great republic stand for just what the Constitution says it stands for: the welfare of all the people all of the time." These words, too, are etched into the Monument as the nation's tribute.

AN AMERICAN MEMORIAL

The Memorial is a testament to the greatness of a nation that does not fear to acknowledge its mistakes and darker chapters and emerges to recommit itself to the principles on which it was founded. It underscores the truth that America is a nation strengthened by its diversity, that constitutional rights must be guarded diligently for all citizens regardless of race, religion or ethnicity. This is an American memorial, created through the efforts of the nation's citizens of Japanese origin, celebrating a recommitment to the historic ideals of equality and justice for all.

The memorial is located in Washington, D.C. at the intersection of Louisiana and New Jersey Avenues and D Street, NW. Nearest Metrorail Station: Union Station Red Line.



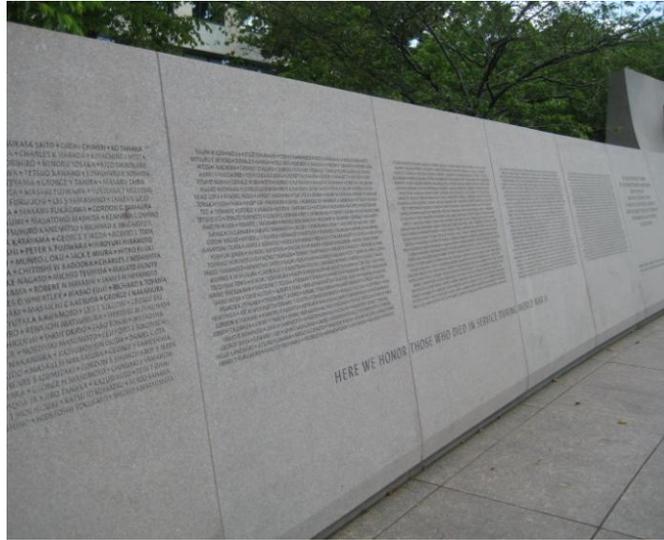
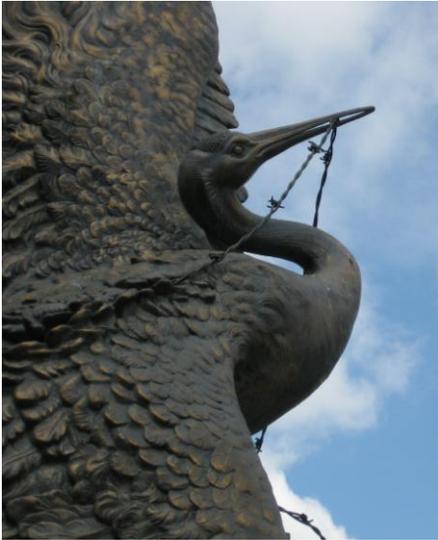
The official airline of the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation

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JAPANESE AMERICAN MEMORIAL TO PATRIOTISM DURING WORLD WAR II



Above left: Detail of the Crane Monument.
Above right: Inscribed names of Japanese American veterans who died in World War II.
Left: View of the Memorial.

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Image: Nina Akamu © 2001

CRANE MONUMENT

A central feature of the Memorial is a sculpture by Nina A. Akamu of a pair of cranes entangled in barbed wire. Standing fourteen feet tall, the upper portions of the monument are visible above the confines of the Memorial wall, symbolic of rising beyond limitations.

The base of the sculpture is rough cut from green Vermont marble which has a beautiful serpentine texture. The identical position of the bronze cranes represents the duality of the universe. Their bodies are nestled side-by-side with their free wings pressed against each other, symbolizing both individual effort and communal support, emphasizing interdependency.

Their right wings are held flush to the sides of the base by an incuse strand of barbed wire. The birds have grasped the wire in their beaks in an attempt to break free. The sculpture is symbolic not only of the Japanese American experience, but of the extrication of anyone from deeply painful and restrictive circumstances. It reminds us of the battles we've fought to overcome our ignorance and prejudice and the meaning of an integrated culture, once pained and torn, now healed and unified. Finally, the monument presents the Japanese American experience as a symbol for all peoples.

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MEDIA COVERAGE



Navajo Code Talkers Honored

April 26, 2010



Navajo Code Talkers were honored for serving their country despite the injustices they suffered from their own government. Native speakers of Navajo served in all six Marine Divisions from 1942 to 1945, passing communications in an unbreakable code. The National Japanese American Memorial Foundation presented their annual Award for Patriotism to the Navajo Code Talkers Association. Three code talkers briefly shared their stories and responded to questions from Mr. Uchida. This National Japanese American Memorial Foundation event was held on Monday, April 26, 2010, at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.

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Newsweek

Events commemorate unjust WWII Japanese detentions: 'We don't want it to happen ever again'

Jesse Washington

The Associated Press

February 19, 2009

Kristine Minami was in college before she learned that her father, grandmother and uncle had been essentially jailed by the U.S. government for the crime of being Japanese.

The detention of 120,000 Japanese-Americans during World War II was not discussed in Minami's household. She learned about it in the 1980s through the National Day of Remembrance, which was observed around the country Thursday.

The discovery led Minami to greater understanding of her culture — and herself. Many hope the Day of Remembrance will also lead to greater understanding that Americans come in all types of packages.

"It got me more interested in my history and my roots," said Minami, who grew up in Maryland with a Japanese father and white mother, and says her Asian heritage is not immediately apparent.

"I learned about being Japanese," said Minami, 40, who ended up writing her senior thesis about the effects of the internment. "It led me down the path to my identity."

Executive Order 9066

Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Feb. 19, 1942, giving the government power to uproot entire innocent communities due to fears of "sabotage and espionage."

In 1988, President Reagan signed a law that apologized and paid \$20,000 to each survivor.

"We have this shared history," said Bonnie Clark, an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Denver who is excavating materials from a former internment camp. The artifacts will be displayed during the university's remembrance program.

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"The internment is very much a Japanese-American story, but it's all of our stories," Clark said. "It's about the decisions we have to make as a populace, holding our

politicians responsible for their behavior, understanding that we all come to the table with these different traditions and trying to balance out a vision for ourselves."

The remembrance also serves as a sort of conscience, a reminder of the balance between security and civil rights in the era of global terrorism, Guantanamo Bay and expanded government wiretapping.

"It shows the fragile nature of our civil and constitutional rights, and the importance of holding people accountable and remaining vigilant," said Gordon Aoyagi, a board member of the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation, which was holding a panel discussion in Washington D.C. on Thursday to mark the occasion.

For Mary Murakami, who spent three years in a detention camp, the day represents something simple.

"It shows that it did happen," said Murakami, now 82.

Murakami was 14 when she saw a notice posted on a telephone pole outside her San Francisco home saying that all Japanese families would be "evacuated" and taken to camps.

Her parents, fearful that they would be separated from their children, took a portrait of themselves and gave a copy to each child. Murakami still has the photo.

Lived behind barbed wire

Families were told to take only what they could carry. The Murakamis and other families stored their belongings in their church, but thieves soon broke the door down and ransacked the storage room.

Murakami lived with her family behind barbed wire at a camp on a dry Utah lake bed. Instead of sharing family meals, they ate in a mess hall. Toilet stalls faced each other and had no doors. She slept on an Army cot, the family's single room warmed by a potbellied stove.

In 1943 the government decided to test the loyalty of the detainees with a questionnaire, Murakami remembers. One of the questions was, "Would you be willing to serve in the U.S. Army?" Her brother answered "yes" and was drafted out of the detention camp.

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After three years of confinement, Murakami's family was released. They were given \$25 each to start over.

Today, Murakami shows little bitterness over this history, just a determination that it not be forgotten.

"We don't want it to happen ever again," she said.

Minami calls the internment saga "a really powerful story about democracy."

"It's an ugly part of American history, but it's important for people to know," she said.

"Because of that ugly chapter, we had a renewal of the American democracy."

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Texas Vets Reunite with Japanese-American Rescuers

Juan A. Lozano
November 1, 2009

HOUSTON — Even though it was 65 years ago, Al Tortolano clearly recalls the one thought, the only thought, that ran through his mind as his military unit was surrounded by German soldiers during World War II.

"About the only thing you could think of was family. Will I ever see my family again?" remembered the 88-year-old Tortolano, part of what was dubbed the "Lost Battalion."

It was October 1944 and Tortolano was part of the 1st Battalion, 141st Regiment, 36th Infantry Division — a Texas military unit that was surrounded by German soldiers in northern France's Vosges Mountains.

The prayers of Tortolano and the other members of the 1st Battalion were answered by the Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a unit made up almost entirely of Japanese-Americans. The 442nd broke through the German ranks and was able to free the 1st Battalion.

The epic and bloody rescue, which lasted several days, became one of World War II's most famed battles. The 442nd suffered 814 casualties as it rescued 217 men.



Ret. Pfc Al Tortolano, 88, of Santa Clara, left, and Ret. Pfc George Sakato, 88, of Denver, Colo. chat before a news conference honoring them on Sunday, Nov. 1, 2009, in Houston. A gala was held on Sunday to reunite veterans of the "Lost Battalion" on the 65th anniversary of the World War II battle. The 1st Battalion, 141st Regiment, 36th Infantry Division, a Texas military unit that was surrounded by German soldiers in northern France's Vosges Mountains was rescued by the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a unit made up almost entirely of Japanese-Americans, that broke through the German ranks. "I still can't thank my fellow veterans enough for what they did," said Tortolano. Although the units had reunited once before, this was the largest meeting of surviving members of the two groups. (AP Photo/Sharon Steinmann)

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"I still can't thank my fellow veterans enough for what they did," said Tortolano, who stood next to his wife Alice, who also expressed her gratitude to the 442nd.

Tortolano was among 40 members from both units who gathered in Houston on Sunday, marking the 65th anniversary of the rescue at a fundraising gala hosted by the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation. Although the units had reunited once before, this was the largest meeting of surviving members of the two groups.

Jimmie Kanaya, a veteran of the 442nd — whose members after WWII were proclaimed "Honorary Texans" by Gov. John Connolly — said there is permanent a bond of brotherhood between the men of both units.

"We feel like we are part of each other. We became one," said the 89-year-old, who lives in Gig Harbor, Wash.

The bond was apparent as the more able-bodied veterans helped those in wheelchairs or using canes stand up on stage at Sunday's event. During the reunion, the men hugged one another and exchanged stories of the war and of their lives since then.

Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the veterans of the 442nd are "men of the noblest heart and the greatest courage."

The 442nd became the most decorated unit in U.S. military history, he said.

"Their courage, valor, dedication are values we hold dear as a country — and to do this in what clearly was one of our darkest hours," Mullen said, referencing that many of the 442nd's members had families who were held in internment camps by the U.S. government while they served in the military.

Kanaya said he found it ironic that men who wore the same uniform he did were guarding his parents and sister at an internment camp in Idaho.

"We had to prove we were loyal Americans," Kanaya said. "We were caught between a rock and a hard place. We just had to give it our all."

Tortolano, who lives in Santa Clara, Calif., said he is even more grateful for what the 442nd did considering the discrimination they faced.

"They were sent into some battles other (units) wouldn't go to," he said. "In some ways they were treated as second-class citizens. But they proved they were true Americans."

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A test America failed

WWII internments provide eternal lessons

Norman Y. Mineta

February 18, 2009

The United States — the great country that we are — occasionally makes great mistakes. Remembering one mistake, and the ultimate redress that lifted its stigma of shame, is an occasion marked by the Japanese-American community every Feb. 19.

It has been 67 years since that day in 1942 when President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which led to the removal of at least 120,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast and into internment camps. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor less than three months earlier had been the justification. It did not matter that two-thirds of the internees — myself included — were U.S. citizens. What only mattered during those times of wartime hysteria, racism and weak political leaders was our ancestry.

Most internees lost their homes, their farms, their businesses and their dreams. But we chose not to be victims. The vast majority chose to be what we already were: American patriots.

In service of country

Thousands volunteered from the camps to serve in the U.S. military, where they joined their brethren from Hawaii. But because of Pearl Harbor, our community had to prove its loyalty, and that standard often resulted in unprecedented heroism on the battlefields of Europe and in the Military Intelligence Service, which focused on the Pacific.

After the war, the stigma of shame remained despite efforts to reclaim our good names. It took until 1976 before Executive Order 9066 was repealed by President Ford. During the Carter administration, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians was chartered by Congress to investigate the internment. The end result was the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, signed into law by President Reagan.

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The point we sought to make at the time, and pursue to this day, was that the issues raised by the internment were not Japanese-American issues, but American issues.

Test lingers today

A first test came in 1991. After Iraq had invaded Kuwait, loyal Iraqi Americans found themselves being asked inappropriate loyalty questions by the U.S. government.

The broad national coalition that had supported Japanese Americans was quickly reassembled. A burgeoning pattern of wartime injustice against a U.S. minority was denounced; civil liberties were protected. Our commitment as a nation to justice for all has been tested since; we will no doubt be tested again.

One lesson we have learned, however imperfectly, is that we must not jeopardize civil liberties of any U.S. community in the name of national security. In fact, diverting our nation from its diverse social compact is a goal of those who wish us great ill.

I began my journey standing in my Cub Scout uniform with my family at the rail depot in San Jose, Calif., on May 29, 1942. It is inspiring to review the years since then to see how our nation has grown. Certain forms of bigotry have disappeared or are widely recognized as destructive legacies left to our children unless we act.

We as Americans place great trust in each other through our Constitution. The Constitution is not a document of perfection, however. It is a license to pursue a "more perfect union" among us. It is a document that is only as expert in protecting us as we are determined to protect it.

And every Feb. 19, Japanese Americans remember not only a day when that expertise was lacking, but also the day decades later when the American oath affirming personal justice finally prevailed.

Norman Y. Mineta is a former Cabinet secretary and a founder of the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation.

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Voice of America

World War II 'Lost Battalion' Veterans Reunite

Greg Flakus

November 4, 2009

In late October, 1944 the First Battalion of the U.S. 141st Infantry Regiment, comprised mostly of men from the Texas National Guard, broke through German lines in northeastern France and then found themselves cut off and surrounded by the enemy. They became known as "The Lost Battalion" and would have all died had it not been for the heroic rescue operation carried out by the mostly Japanese-American soldiers of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Around 40 aging veterans from both units came together in Houston on November first for what may be the last time.

The veterans, all in their 80's and 90's now, and their families came from all around the country for this 65th Anniversary event, sponsored by the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation. On hand to greet them was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, who posed for photos with each veteran and hailed their courage and their contribution to U.S. history.

"You represent such a special group of that very special generation and the courage, the valor, the heroism," said Admiral Mullen.

Among those present was 88-year-old George Sakato, who wore the Congressional Medal of Honor he was awarded for his part in the battle to rescue the trapped soldiers. He says he must have had ten lives to have survived the war.

"I have been blown up three or four times, three times, and I have been shot at I do not know how many times and then I had diphtheria, measles and pneumonia," said George Sakato.

The mostly Japanese-American 442nd took heavy casualties and Sakato says he lost one of



VOA photo: G. Flakus

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen at the 'Lost Battalion' reunion



VOA photo: G. Flakus

Medal of Honor recipient George Sakato

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his best friends when the Germans counterattacked.

"I crawled over and he died in my arms and I just lost it [became angry] and I figured I would get the s.o.b [son of a bitch] who shot him or die trying," he said.

Among the more than 200 men Sakato and his fellow soldiers helped rescue was Jack Wilson, who is now 85-years-old.

"If it had not been for them, I would not be here today," said Jack Wilson.

Wilson says the dedication of the Japanese American soldiers was all the more remarkable given the fact that they had left behind their families in internment camps where the U.S. government had placed them out of fear that they might help Japan.

"They put them in these internment camps," he said. "They lost their homes, a lot of them did. They lost everything they had but the clothes on their back."

Wilson says these men demonstrated their loyalty and their effectiveness as fighters.

"They had something to prove and they proved it," said Wilson. "They proved they were good Americans."

In 1988, the U.S. Congress passed a bill that provided reparations to Japanese Americans interned during the war. There is also a memorial dedicated to the patriotism and courage of the Japanese-American soldiers in Washington, DC.

But men like 85-year-old Don Seki, who lost an arm to a burst of machine-gun fire, play-down his own heroism in helping to rescue the "Lost Battalion."

"We had to do it," said Don Seki. "Somebody had to do it, so we went all out. That is our motto - shoot the works, go for broke."

Seki says that was a spirit inculcated in Japanese-American children by their parents.

"The way we were brought up, you cannot let your country down or your family down," he said.

Seki's 442nd Regimental Combat Team became the most decorated unit in US military history for its size and length of service. While their bodies have now become frail with age, they maintain that patriotic spirit and they never forget the men who were unable to come home.

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