

HALLOWED GROUND

By the end of World War Two, America had over 125,000 U.S. Servicemen and women buried in 24 cemeteries in eight countries. There were also thousands listed as “missing in action” and never accounted for.

“ From these honored dead , we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave their last measure of devotion. That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain. That this nation under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth”.

Abraham Lincoln
Gettysburg Address
November 19, 1863

World War One

On April 6, 1917, the U.S. would be embroiled in the war in Europe. This would last until November 11, 1918. During that time, over 70,000 Americans would be killed. Over 30,000 of the killed would be left where they fell as requested by their families.

Outside of London, England in the Brook Wood American Cemetery lies the remains of 468 American servicemen and women and a set of mounted tablets with the names of 563 American sailors lost at sea.

There are also other cemeteries located throughout France:

- The Suresnes American Cemetery with the remains of 1,500 Americans and a memorial to the 24 Americans missing in action.
- The Aisne-Marne (Belleau Wood) American Cemetery where more Marines died than the combined history of the Corps up to that time. There you will find the remains of 2,289 Americans and tablets listing the names of over 1,060 missing in action.
- The Oise-Aisne American Cemetery with the remains of 6,000 Americans and a memorial to the 241 Americans missing in action.
- The St. Mihiel American Cemetery with the remains of 4,153 Americans and a memorial to the 284 Americans missing in action.
- The Somme American Cemetery with the remains of 1,844 Americans and a

memorial to the 333 Americans missing in action.

- The Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery with the remains of 14,246 Americans and a memorial to the 954 Americans missing in action. This is the biggest cemetery in Europe to contain American remains. Of this 14,246, many were National Guardsmen from Missouri and Kansas.
- The Flanders Field American Cemetery is actually located in Belgium and holds the remains of 368 Americans with a memorial to the 43 Americans missing in action.

At the Suresnes American Cemetery lies the remains of twin sisters Gladys and Dorothy Cromwell. Working together at a forward field hospital they saw the war and its devastation first hand. On January 19, 1919, both committed suicide by jumping overboard from their ship returning them from France.

At the Somme American Cemetery lies the remains of Helen Fairchild. When her field hospital was hit with mustard gas, she gave her mask to a wounded soldier. She died on January 18, 1918 of complications from the mustard gas. A nurse was quoted as saying of Helen Fairchild, "Never tell me a women can't be as brave as a man".

At the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery lies the remains of famed poet Joyce Kilmer. Refusing a commission to officer, Sergeant Kilmer wrote "Rouge Bouquet" in homage to the fallen in that battle. On July 30, 1918, Sergeant Kilmer was killed by a sniper's bullet. He left behind a wife and 5 small children.

WORLD WAR TWO

On December 7, 1941, America was again embroiled in an international war. From 1941 to 1945, America would lose over 400,000 American lives. American cemeteries on foreign soil would once again be needed.

Of the 400,000 remains, over 40% or 93,000 would be left "where they fell" as requested by their families.

Because of the island hopping strategy used in the Pacific, many of the islands would hold the remains of American soldiers, marines, and sailors. At the end of the war, all American remains not sent back to America would be reburied at the Manilla American Cemetery in the Philippines.

At the Manilla American Cemetery there are 17,201 Americans buried there including 570 Philippine Scouts inducted into the U.S. Military by order of President Roosevelt.

The memorial for the Americans missing in action total 36,285. This is the largest foreign cemetery of American remains in the world.

While the war in the Pacific was raging, so was the war in Europe. American cemeteries would once again be scattered throughout Europe:

- The North Africa American Cemetery holds the remains of 2,841 Americans and a memorial to the 3,724 Americans missing in action during the North Africa campaign.
- The Cambridge American Cemetery in England holds the remains of 3,812 Americans and a memorial to the 5,127 Americans missing in action. Of this amount, almost all were airmen.
- The Sicily-Rome American Cemetery holds the remains of 7,761 Americans and a memorial to the 3,095 Americans missing in action.
- The Florence American Cemetery located in Italy holds the remains of 4,402 Americans and a memorial to the 1,409 Americans missing in action.
- The Normandy-France American Cemetery is the first European cemetery of the war. In sight of the cemetery lies the coast line that American soldiers stormed on June 6, 1944. On that day, over 3,000 Americans were killed. The remains of 9,387 Americans can be found at this cemetery and a memorial to the 1,557 Americans missing in action.
- The Brittany, France American cemetery holds the remains of 4,410 Americans and a memorial to the 498 Americans missing in action.
- The Rhone, France American Cemetery holds the remains of 860 Americans and a memorial to 294 Americans missing in action.
- The Epinal, France American Cemetery holds the remains of 5,255 Americans and a memorial to the 424 Americans missing in action.
- The Netherlands American Cemetery holds the remains of 8,301 Americans and a memorial to 1,722 Americans missing in action.
- The Luxembourg American Cemetery in Belgium holds the remains of 5,706 Americans and a memorial to the 371 Americans missing in action. Many of the dead were lost in the Battle of the Bulge. At the front of the cemetery rest the remains of General George S. Patton Jr. facing many of the troops he lead.

- The Lorraine, France American Cemetery holds the remains of 10,489 Americans and a memorial to 444 Americans missing in action.

As with the American cemeteries of World War One, stories of heroics, told and untold, will forever be a part of the American physic.

At the Normandy cemetery lies the remains of General Theodore Roosevelt Jr. (July 12, 1944) a Medal of Honor recipient who although failing in health, led his men onto Utah beach on D Day. He passed away a month later from complications and was buried with his men. Alongside him, lies his brother Quentin Roosevelt a pilot killed on July 14, 1918 in World War One.

At the Normandy cemetery too, lies the remains of a father and son, Colonel Oliver W. Reed (July 30, 1944) and First Lieutenant Oliver Reed Jr. (July 6, 1944). The wife and mother of Colonel Reed and Lieutenant Reed was notified of their deaths on the same day.

In the Netherlands cemetery lies the remains of Sergeant Pete Bocce. When first arriving in the area, he stayed with a family in the local town. He was killed 14 days later. Since 1945, the young girl of the family has placed flowers on his grave site every Memorial Day, Christmas Day and birthday without fail.

At the Lorraine cemetery lies the remains of John Akimoto (August 2, 1944) and Victor Akimoto (December 14, 1944). The brothers lie beside each other and served with honor even while their parents were being held as prisoners as part of the infamous internment camps of Japanese Americans.

At the Sicily-Rome cemetery rest the remains of 22 sets of brothers buried along side each other. At this cemetery you will also find the remains of Second Lieutenant Ellen Ainsworth killed while evacuating wounded Americans from a field hospital on February 16, 1944.

Of the 36,285 names that appear on the missing in action memorial at the Manilla American Cemetery are the names of five brothers. The Sullivan brothers were all killed when the U.S.S. Juneau was sunk on November 13, 1942 while on operations in the Pacific.

The five brothers were George Thomas age 28, Francis Henry age 26, Joseph Eugene age 24, Madison Abel age 23, and Albert Leo age 20. Francis, Joseph, and Madison were killed instantly. Albert would drown the next day and George disappeared from his raft in the night presumably distraught over the loss of his four younger brothers. Due to security concerns, their parents were not notified until January 12, 1943. When the three

Naval Officers appeared at the Sullivan door, the father ask "which one?" The Commander answered "all five". Mrs. Sullivan fainted.

On Memorial day in 1958, unknown American remains were removed from all 13 European cemeteries along with unknown remains from the Pacific and Atlantic theaters of operation. They were placed alongside the remains of the unknown Americans from World War One.

It is said that the way we remember our war dead is the mark of the nations character. A measure of it's heart and soul.

At the entrance to one of the European cemeteries stands an engraved plaque that reads:

" This memorial has been erected by the United States of America in proud and grateful memory of her soldiers-sailors-marines-and airmen who laid down their lives in all quarters of the earth that other people might be free from oppression. Let us here highly resolve that these honored dead shall not have died in vain."

In writing this, I have become humbled beyond anything I ever imagined. Why did I take the time to even put all of this down on paper? I think I know now. It was for Gladys and Dorothy Cromwell, Helen Fairchild, Joyce Killmer, Theodore and Quentin Roosevelt, Oliver and Oliver Reed Jr., Ellen Ainsworth, the Sullivan Brothers, George Patton, Peter Bocce, John and Victor Akimoto, the 22 sets of brothers at Sicily-Rome and the unknowns from Europe, the Pacific, and the Atlantic theaters that were gathered and moved in 1958 to Arlington Cemetery and now rest with their World War One brothers. By sharing this, they become relevant. They are once again remembered.

I also did it for my Dad Ralph, Uncle Carlie, Jack, Vernon, Gervin, and for Raymond.

They're all with their brothers now....sleep well and thank you.

C.V. Egan

February 24, 2013