

National World War II Memorial

Earlier this year, I wrote about the Vietnam Memorial and the Korean Memorial. This week I did some research on the most recent memorial – the WWII Memorial. Unveiled in the Spring of 2004, the memorial honors the 16 million people who served as part of the American armed forces during World War II, including more than 400,000 who lost their lives during the War. The memorial is at the east end of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. The WWII Memorial, along with the other memorials, is free and open to the public 24 hours a day. Park rangers are on duty to answer questions from 9:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily, and interpretive programs are provided throughout the day and upon request.

Symbols of America's triumph in the Second World War are displayed all over the Memorial. The 56 granite columns symbolize unity among the 48 states, seven federal territories and the District of Columbia. The columns form a semi-circle around the memorial's plaza, with two 43-foot tall arches on opposite sides. The northern arch represents victory in the Atlantic, while the southern arch symbolizes victory in the Pacific.

On the left (towards the Pacific arch), the scenes progress through the experience of war, from physical exams all the way to homecoming. The right side pays tribute to the Atlantic, as the last scene depicts American and Russian armies shaking hands as the two sides met in Germany at the conclusion of the war. The US and Russians were on the same side during the War.

Part of the memorial is the Freedom Wall. 4,048 gold stars pay tribute to American lives lost at war (each star represents 100 Americans), while dozens of battle names and military campaign destinations are also on display. In front of the wall, a stone fittingly reads, "Here we mark the price of freedom." Another symbol from the War is the inscription of "Kilroy was here," is located in both the Pacific and European sides. On the National WWII Memorial website, is a Registry where you can search or add the names of individuals serving during the War. Fellow MSUM Alum, Dan Murphy who passed away earlier this year is listed in the registry. We have his story posted on our Heritage Education website (heritageed.com). Dan served in the Army Air Corps and was a POW in Germany after being shot down on his 54th bombing mission.

Designed by the former chief of the Rhode Island School of Design, Friedrich St. Florian, the memorial represents a relationship between the home front and the battle front. The memorial is dedicated to the 'greatest generation', a phrase credited to former NBC Nightly News anchor Tom Brokaw. Brokaw wrote two books, *The Greatest Generation* (1998) and *The Greatest Generation Speaks* (1999). I've read both of them and they are excellent. Our local Honor Flight committee has raised funds to provide trips for our WWII Veterans to DC and the Memorial.