



At an Oct. 24, 2011, dedication ceremony for the Jewish Chaplains Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery, Ken Kraetzer tells the audience how the memorial came to be.

Monument Recognizes Jewish Chaplains' Sacrifices

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By Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service

ARLINGTON, Va., Oct. 24, 2011 -- The sacrifices of 14 rabbis killed on active military service are now recognized on Chaplains Hill at Arlington National Cemetery here.

Many of the rabbis' family members attended the dedication ceremony on Chaplains Hill, and hundreds attended a larger ceremony at the Arlington Memorial Amphitheater today.

The monument joins three other memorials to chaplains killed in the line of duty. In 1981, a Protestant chaplains' memorial was dedicated and, in 1989, a similar one was erected to remember Catholic chaplains.

A World War II episode was the driving force behind the memorial. Ken Kraetzler had grown up hearing the story of the four chaplains of the USAT Dorchester. The four men were aboard the Army transport with 900 other soldiers crossing the North Atlantic when German torpedoes smashed into the ship in February 1943.

The four chaplains -- two Protestant reverends, a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi -- strove to keep soldiers calm and helped to pass out life jackets. When they ran out of jackets, they gave their own away. They were last seen as the ship was going down, arm-in-arm, praying together.

Kraetzler, from White Plains, N.Y., visited Arlington National Cemetery. "I went to Chaplains Hill and found the names of George Fox and Clark Poling on the Protestant memorial and John Washington on the Catholic monument, but I couldn't find the name of Rabbi Alexander D. Goode, because there was no Jewish memorial," he said.

Kraetzler found out what needed to be done and proceeded to do it. He received support from the Sons of the American Legion, many Jewish war veterans groups and the Jewish Chaplains Council. "Many people donated to make the memorial a reality," he said.

He discovered that 14 Jewish chaplains from World War II to Vietnam had died in the line of duty.

Alexander David Goode Fried, the Dorchester rabbi's grandson, attended the unveiling of the memorial and the dedication ceremony. His grandfather's heroism "was always something I was aware of as a kid," he said.

"My grandmother always wanted to keep her private life private," he added. "Only much later in life was she able to talk about it. Before she died, she and a family member of another of the four chaplains -- George Fox -- worked together to promote the interfaith aspect of the four chaplains' sacrifice."

Fried called the ceremony today a "high point," but not a "culmination" of efforts to highlight the sacrifices of Jewish chaplains. "I hope this doesn't just end here," he said. "The cross-faith message of the four chaplains has direct relevance to today's world. I think the lessons from it are universal, directly applicable and timeless."

Meeting the families of the other chaplains was interesting to Fried. "We all shared that sense of pride and honor, but also loss," he said. "We all are proud of their accomplishments, but there is always the sense of what would lives have been like with them in them."

Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Cecil Richardson, the Air Force Chief of Chaplains, lauded the 14 rabbis during his talk at the Memorial Amphitheater. He said he didn't know the men, but after 35 years as a military chaplain, he knows what drove them.

"They were 14 men who stepped forward as volunteers to provide spiritual care for the men and women in uniform," he said. "They comforted the wounded, they buried the dead; they supported the faith of all of our troops without regard to race, or ethnicity, or religion."

The 14 men "walked where warriors walked. They went where warriors go," Richardson said. "That's what made them military chaplains. Right now there are over 800 chaplains -- Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine -- deployed at locations throughout the world in dangerous places.

At this moment, chaplains and chaplain assistants are transforming places in the harshest environments into sacred places of worship and hope.”

The West Point Jewish Chapel Cadet Choir sang throughout the event and had the last word in the ceremony, singing “God Bless America” with the audience joining in.

The memorial was dedicated to the following chaplains: Army Capt. Nachman S. Arnoff, Army Lt. Col. Meir Engel, Army 1st Lt. Frank Goldenberg, Army 1st Lt. Alexander D. Goode, Army 1st Lt. Henry Goody, Air Force Capt. Joseph I. Hoenig, Army Maj. Samuel Dodkin Hurwitz, Army 1st Lt. Herman L. Rosen, Army Capt. Morton Harold Singer, Air Force Capt. David M. Sobel, Army Capt. Irving Tepper and Army 1st Lt. Louis Werfel.