

Korean War Veterans Memorial

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Washington, D.C.



*"Freedom Is Not Free."
These four words on the wall of the
Korean War Veterans Memorial reflect
the sentiments of men and women who
served in the Korean War—as well as
those who fought and sacrificed to
preserve democracy throughout our
nation's history.*



From 1950 to 1953 the United States joined with United Nations forces in Korea to take a stand against what was deemed a threat to democratic nations worldwide. At war's end, a million and a half American veterans returned to a peacetime world of families, homes, and jobs—and to a country reluctant to view the Korean War as something to memorialize. But to the men and women who served, the Korean War could never be a forgotten war.

The passing of four decades had brought a new perspective to the war and its aftermath. The time had come, in the eyes of the nation, to set aside a place of remembrance for the people who served in this hard-fought war half a world away. The Korean War Veterans Memorial honors those Americans who answered the call, those who worked and fought under the most trying of circumstances, and those who gave their lives for the cause of freedom.

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NPS/TERRY ADAMS

A War Half a World Away



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Only five years had passed since the end of World War II when the United States once again found itself embroiled in a major international conflict. In the early morning hours of June 25, 1950, the communist government of North Korea launched an attack into South Korea. Determined to support the world's imperiled democracies, the United States immediately sent troops from Japan to join those already stationed in Korea; they fought with other nations under the U.N. flag. What was envisioned as a short, decisive campaign became a prolonged, bitter, frustrating fight that threatened to explode beyond Korean

borders. For three years the fighting raged. In 1953 an uneasy peace returned by means of a negotiated settlement that established a new boundary near the original one at the 38th parallel.

One-and-a-half million American men and women, a true cross-section of the nation's populace, struggled side by side during the conflict. They served as soldiers, chaplains, nurses, clerks, and in a host of other combat and support roles. Many risked their lives in extraordinary acts of heroism. Of these, 131 received the Medal of Honor, the nation's most esteemed tribute to combat bravery.

A Place for Reflection

Viewed from above, the memorial is a circle intersected by a triangle (see below). Visitors approaching the memorial come first to the triangular Field of Service. Here, a group of 19 stainless-steel statues, created by World War II veteran Frank Gaylord, depicts a squad on patrol and evokes the experience of American ground troops in Korea. Strips of granite and scrubby juniper bushes suggest the rugged Korean terrain, while windblown ponchos recall the harsh weather. This symbolic patrol brings together members of the U.S. Air Force, Army, Marines, and Navy; the men portrayed are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

A granite curb on the north side of the statues lists the 22 countries of the United Nations that sent troops or gave med-

ical support in defense of South Korea. On the south side is a black granite wall. Its polished surface mirrors the statues, intermingling the reflected images with the faces etched into the granite. The etched mural is based on actual photographs of unidentified American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. The faces represent all those who provided support for the ground troops. Together these images reflect the determination of U.S. forces and the countless ways in which Americans answered their country's call to duty.

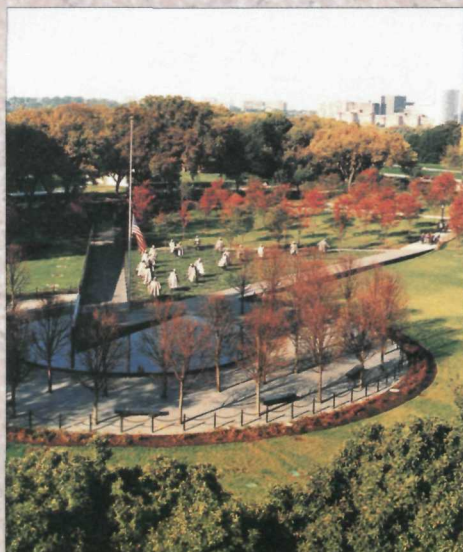
The adjacent Pool of Remembrance, encircled by a grove of trees, provides a quiet setting. Numbers of those killed, wounded, missing in action, and held prisoner-of-war are etched in stone



PHOTO/ROBERT SHAER

nearby. Opposite this counting of the war's toll, another granite wall bears a message inlaid in silver: Freedom Is Not Free.

Establishment and Dedication



NPS

On October 28, 1986, Congress authorized the American Battle Monuments Commission to establish a memorial in Washington, D.C., to honor members of the U.S. armed forces who served in the Korean War. President Ronald Reagan appointed the Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board to recommend a site and design and to raise construction funds. Ground was broken in November 1993. Frank Gaylord was chosen as the principal sculptor of the statues, and Louis Nelson was selected to create the mural of etched faces on the wall. President William J. Clinton and Kim Young Sam, President of the Republic of Korea, dedicated the memorial on July 27, 1995, the 42nd anniversary of the armistice that ended the war.

Visiting the Memorial

The memorial is staffed daily except December 25 by park rangers who give talks and answer questions. A bookstore in the nearby Lincoln Memorial sells items about the memorial and the Korean War.

More Information

Korean War Veterans Memorial
National Mall & Memorial Parks
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www.nps.gov/kowa

The memorial is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks visit www.nps.gov.