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THE MARINE CORPS WAR MEMORIAL

The Marine Corps War Memorial stands as a symbol of this grateful Nation's esteem for the honored dead of the U.S. Marine Corps. While the statue depicts one of the most iconic photos of World War II, the memorial is dedicated to all Marines who have given their lives in the defense of the United States, since 1775.

The Marine Corps War Memorial depicts the raising of the American flag at Mount Suribachi on 23 February 1945 by U.S. Marines in World War II during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

The monument is located in Arlington, Virginia on a 7½-acre tract of land managed by the Department of the Interior. The site is on a hill approximately 100 feet above the Potomac River, and offers a scenic view of the Nation's capital.



Iwo Jima, which means Sulfur Island, was strategically important as an air base for fighter escorts supporting long-range bombing missions against mainland Japan. Because of the distance between mainland Japan and

U.S. bases in the Mariana Islands, the capture of Iwo Jima would provide an emergency landing strip for crippled B-29 planes returning from bombing runs. The seizure of Iwo would allow for sea and air blockades, the ability to conduct intensive air bombardment and to destroy the enemy's air and naval capabilities. The seizure of Iwo Jima was deemed necessary, but the prize would not come easy. The fighting that took place during the 36-day assault would be immortalized in the words of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who said, "Among the Americans who served on Iwo Island, uncommon valor was a common virtue."

On the morning of 19 February 1945, the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions invaded the Island of Iwo Jima as part of General MacArthur's "island hopping" campaign. The small island lies 660 miles south of Tokyo, Japan.

The 28th Regiment of the 5th Marine Division was ordered to capture the extinct volcano on the southern tip of the island named Mount Suribachi. The Marines reached the base of the volcano on the afternoon of 21 February and by nightfall of the next day, the Marines had the mountain surrounded.

Flag Raisings Early on the morning of 23 February, the Marines from Easy Company, 2nd Battalion started to climb the volcano. By 1030 they had reached the top and erected a small American flag. Later that afternoon, five Marines and a Navy corpsman raised a larger more visible flag. The second flag raising is what is depicted in the monument at Arlington, Virginia.

The Marines and Sailor, who participated in the flag raising, depicted in the statue are listed in the table below:

Name	Rank	Hometown
Michael Strank*	Sergeant	Conemaugh, PA
Harlan H. Block*	Corporal	Weslaco, TX
Franklin R. Sousley*	Private First Class	Ewing, KY
Rene A. Gagnon	Private First Class	Manchester, NH
Ira Hayes	Private First Class	Bapchule, AZ
John H. Bradley	Pharmacists Mate Second Class	Appleton, WI
Those names marked with an * were killed during the later phases in the Battle of Iwo Jima.		

The Marines and Sailors who fought on Iwo Jima wore sage green herringbone twill, better known as HBT's, uniforms. The standard footgear was rough out leather shoes known as "boondockers" and the ensemble was topped off with the M1 steel helmet. These uniform items are accurately recreated in the memorial sculpture.

At the conclusion of World War II, the United States Congress commissioned de Weldon to construct the Iwo Jima statue in the realist tradition based upon the famous photograph of Joe Rosenthal—of the Associated Press Agency that was taken on 23 February 1945—and the design of Horace W. Peaslee. De Weldon took 9 years to make the memorial, and was assisted by hundreds of other sculptors.

Sculpting Felix de Weldon, who worked on the project from 1945 until its completion in 1954, sculpted the Marine Corps War Memorial. He was born on 12 April 1907 in Vienna, Austria and died 3 June 2003 in Woodstock, Virginia. He was buried in Arlington Cemetery.

The three surviving flag raisers—Gagnon, Hayes, and Bradley—posed for the sculptor, who modeled their faces in clay. All available pictures and physical characteristics of the three who had given their lives—Strank, Block, and Sousley—were collected and then used in the modeling of their faces.

Once the statue was completed in plaster, it was disassembled and trucked to Brooklyn, N.Y. for casting in bronze. The casting process took nearly 3 years to complete. After the 108 parts had been cast, cleaned, finished, and chased, they were reassembled into approximately a dozen pieces and shipped back to our Nation's capital by a three-truck convoy. In Arlington, they were bolted and welded together from the inside via a trap door in one of the figures cartridge belts.

The total cost of the memorial was \$850,000 that was paid for with private donations from Marines and friends of the Marine Corps. No public funds were used.

The 32-foot high figures are shown erecting a 60-foot bronze flagpole from which a cloth flag flies 24 hours a day in accordance with the Presidential Proclamation of 12 June 1961. The statue is the largest bronze statue in the world at 78 feet tall and weighing 100 tons. The figures are armed with either a 16-foot-long M-1 Garand rifle or a 12-foot-long M-1 carbine. Their combat knives are 5½ feet long and their helmets are 3½ feet in diameter. The statue rests on a 700-ton concrete base surrounded by 389 tons of highly polished Bonaccord black granite from Sweden.

Marines from Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. perform their famous Sunset Parade in front of the memorial every Tuesday evening at 1900 during the summer months. The parade features a precision drill exhibition by the Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon and a "Music-In-Motion" performance by the Marine Drum and Bugle Corps.

For more information on the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial or the Sunset Parades performed there, contact the Public Affairs Office at (202) 433-4173.