

Four Chaplain Ceremony

Sunday, February 7, 2016

On February 3, 1943, the USAT DORCHESTER was tragically sunk. Of the 902 young men on board, only 230 survived. Many of those survivors owe their lives to the courage and leadership exhibited by the heroic Four Chaplains, who, in sacrificing their lives, created a unique legacy of brotherhood.

Since 1951, the Chapel of Four Chaplains has spread the message of interfaith cooperation and selfless service, touching the lives of thousands of people across this great country.

There will be thousands of Four Chaplains Interfaith Memorial Services held across the nation on or near February 3rd. This service is a tribute to those courageous Chaplains and the 672 brave young men who lost their lives on that fateful night. Further, this service honors all those who have served, and whose courage and faith have sustained our country.

It is important that we teach our children and youth about these great events and great sacrifices, for they are our future. It is vital for them to understand what selfless service on behalf of others can accomplish.

At 12:30 A.M. on February 3, 1943, the bell on the troopship DORCHESTER rang twice and never sounded again. The DORCHESTER was torpedoed by an enemy sub-marine and 672 young men paid the supreme sacrifice. Included in the 672 were Four Men of God -- a rabbi, a Roman Catholic priest, a Methodist minister, and a Dutch Re-formed minister -- all Army Chaplains.

These Four Chaplains gave their life jackets to save four soldiers and, in so doing, gave up their only means of survival. They were last seen on the deck of the ship with their arms linked together and their heads bowed in prayer as they went to their watery graves in the North Atlantic off the coast of Greenland. Each chaplain received the Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Cross posthumously.



Alexander D. Goode was born in Brooklyn, New York on May 10, 1911. His father was a Rabbi and his mother, Fay had two other sons, Joseph and Moses, and a daughter, Agatha. Alex received medals at Eastern High School, Washington, DC for tennis, swimming and track. He led his class in scholarship too! He planned to follow in his father's footsteps and become a Rabbi, but that did not keep him from having a laughing, shouting, hail-fellow-well-met boyhood with all the Protestant

and Catholic boys in his neighborhood. He graduated from Eastern in 1929.

He entered the University of Cincinnati and graduated in 1934 with an A.B. degree...and then on to Hebrew Union College with a B.H. degree in 1937. He later received his Ph.D. from John Hopkins University in 1940.

Alex married his childhood sweetheart, Theresa Flax, daughter of Nathan and Rose Flax. Theresa was a niece of singer and motion picture star, Al Jolson. They were married on October 7, 1935. His first assignment as an ordained Rabbi was at a synagogue in Marion, Indiana in 1936. On July 16, 1937, he was transferred to the Beth Israel synagogue in York, Pennsylvania until mid-1942. Alex and Theresa had a daughter, Rosalie, who was born in 1939.

Rabbi Goode applied to become a chaplain with the U.S. Navy in January 1941, but he was not accepted at that time. Right after Pearl Harbor, he tried again, this time with the Army, and received an appointment on July 21, 1942.

Chaplain Goode went on active duty on August 9, 1942 and he was selected for the Chaplains School at Harvard. He had courses in map reading, first aid, law, and chemical warfare. Chaplain Goode was then assigned to the 333rd Airbase Squadron in Goldsboro, North Carolina. In October 1942, he was transferred to Camp Myles Standish in Taunton, Massachusetts and Alex was reunited with Chaplains Fox, Poling and Washington, who were classmates at Harvard.

It was January 1943 when he boarded the U.S.A.T. Dorchester in Boston and embarkation to Greenland. Chaplain Goode was killed in action on February 3, 1943 in the icy waters of the North Atlantic when the Dorchester was sunk by a German U-boat. Chaplain Goode was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Cross.



George L. Fox was born March 15, 1900 in Lewistown, Pennsylvania. In addition to George, he had a sister Gertrude and brothers Bert, Leo and John. When George was just 17, he left school, and with strong determination, convinced the military authorities he was 18 and joined the ambulance corps in 1917, shortly after the United States entered World War I. George was placed in the ambulance corps and shipped to Camp Newton D. Baker in Texas. On December 3, 1917, George

embarked from Camp Merritt, New Jersey, and boarded the US Huron en route to France. As a medical corps assistant, he was highly decorated for bravery and was awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart and the French Croix de Guerre.

Upon his discharge, he returned home to Altoona, completed his last year in high school, and went to work for the Guarantee Trust Company. In 1923, he entered Moody Institute in Illinois, where he married at Winona Lake, Indiana. After he withdrew from Moody, he became an itinerant preacher in the Methodist faith. A son, Wyatt Ray, was born on November 11, 1924. After several successful years, George held a student pastorate in Downs, Illinois. He entered Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington in 1929 and graduated with an A.B. degree in 1931. Again as a student pastorate in Rye, New Hampshire, he entered the Boston University School of Theology. George was ordained a Methodist minister on June 10, 1934 and graduated with a S.T.B. degree. He was appointed pastor in Waits River, Vermont. Their second child, Mary Elizabeth, was born shortly thereafter. In 1936, he accepted a pastorate in Union Village, Vermont. His next calling was in Gilman, Vermont where he joined the Walter G. Moore American Legion Post. He was later appointed state chaplain and historian for the Legion.

In mid-1942, George decided to join the Army Chaplain Service and he was appointed on July 24, 1942. He went on active duty August 8, 1942, the same day his son Wyatt enlisted in the Marine Corps. He was assigned to the Chaplains school at Harvard and then reported to the 411th Coast Artillery Battalion at Camp Davis. He was then reunited with Chaplains Goode, Poling and Washington at Camp Myles Standish in Taunton, Massachusetts and their fateful trip on the USAT DORCHESTER. Chaplain Fox was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Cross.



John P. Washington was born in Newark, New Jersey on July 18, 1908. His parents were Frank and Mary; in addition they had daughters Mary and Anna, and sons Thomas, Francis, Leo and Edmund. In 1914, John was enrolled at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Elementary School. In those days, times were rough for a poor immigrant family, but John helped out; he took a newspaper route to help his mother with extra money. John was active in sports and he also began piano lessons. He loved music

and sang in the church choir. When he entered seventh grade, he felt strongly about becoming a priest...during the previous year, he became an altar boy and his priestly destiny was in process.

John entered Seton Hall in South Orange, New Jersey to complete his high school and college courses in preparation for the priesthood. He graduated in 1931 with an A.B. degree. He entered Immaculate Conception Seminary in Darlington, New Jersey and received his minor orders on May 26, 1933. John excelled in the seminary, was a sub deacon at all the solemn masses, and later became a deacon on December 25, 1934. John was elected prefect of his class and was ordained a priest on June 15, 1935.

Father Washington's first parish was at St. Genevieve's in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and then he served at St. Venantius for a year. In 1938, he was assigned to St. Stephen's in Arlington, New Jersey. Shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack of December 7, 1941, he received his appointment as a chaplain in the United States Army. Father Washington went on active duty May 9, 1942. He was named Chief of the Chaplains Reserve Pool, in Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. In June 1942, he was assigned to the 76th Infantry Division in Ft. George Meade, Maryland. In November 1942, he reported to Camp Myles Standish in Taunton, Massachusetts and met Chaplains Fox, Goode and Poling at Chaplains School at Harvard.

Father Washington boarded the U.S.A.T. Dorchester at the Embarkation Camp at Boston Harbor in January 1943 en route to Greenland. Chaplain Washington was killed in action on February 3, 1943, when the Dorchester was sunk by a German U-boat. Chaplain Washington was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Cross.



Clark V. Poling was born August 7, 1910 in Columbus, Ohio. He was the son of Susie Jane Vandersall of East Liberty, Ohio and Daniel A. Poling of Portland, Oregon. Clark's siblings were Daniel, Mary and Elizabeth. Clark attended Whitney Public School in Auburndale, Massachusetts where his teachers remembered his maturity and delicate side of his nature. The Auburndale days ended when his mother died in 1918. She is buried at Greenlawn Cemetery, Uniontown, Ohio. Clark's father

was an Evangelical Minister and in 1936 was rebaptized as a Baptist minister. Reverend Daniel Poling was remarried on August 11, 1919 to Lillian Diebold Heingartner of Canton, Ohio.

Clark attended Oakwood, a Quaker high school in Poughkeepsie, New York, and was a good student and an excellent football halfback. Clark was a council member and president of the student body. In 1929, he enrolled at Hope College in Holland, Michigan and spent his last two years at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, graduating in 1933 with an A.B. degree. Clark entered Yale University's Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut and graduated with his B.D. degree in 1936. He was ordained in the Reformed Church in America and his first assignment was the First Church of Christ, New London, Connecticut. Shortly thereafter, he accepted the assignment of Pastor of the First Reformed Church in Schenectady, New York.

Clark was married to Betty Jung of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and the next year, Clark, Jr. (Corky) was born. With our country now at war with Japan, Germany and Italy, he decided to become a chaplain. Talking with his father, Dr. Daniel A. Poling, who was a chaplain in World War I, he was told that chaplains in that conflict sustained the highest mortality rate of all military personnel. Without hesitation, he was appointed on June 10, 1942 as a chaplain with the 131st Quartermaster Truck Regiment and reported to Camp Shelby, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on June 25, 1942. Later he attended Chaplains School at Harvard with Chaplains Fox, Goode and Washington after his transfer to Camp Myles Standish in Taunton, Massachusetts. Shortly after the U.S.A.T. Dorchester was sunk on February 3, 1943, his wife, Betty, gave birth to a daughter, Susan Elizabeth, on April 20. Chaplain Poling was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Cross.