



# SEMPER FIDELIS

FURTHER REVIEW

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THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

On Nov. 10, 1954 — 70 years ago today — President Dwight D. Eisenhower dedicated the Marine Corps War Memorial at Arlington, Virginia, near the gate to Arlington National Cemetery.

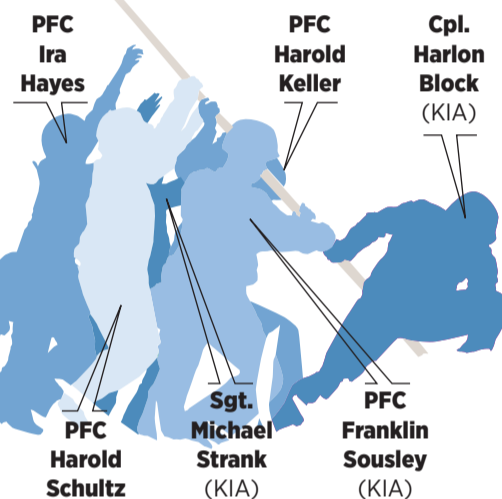
Many folks refer to it as the Iwo Jima Memorial.

## INSPIRED BY A POWERFUL WORLD WAR II PHOTOGRAPH

On Feb. 23, 1945, U.S. Marines captured Mount Suribachi on the Pacific island of Iwo Jima and placed a small flag at the summit. That afternoon, when a group of Marines replaced that flag with a larger one, combat photographer Joe Rosenthal of the Associated Press was there.

The image he shot that day became one of the most famous combat photos taken and would win Rosenthal a Pulitzer Prize.

Sculptor Felix de Weldon — who was, at the time, on duty with the Navy — was moved by the image and decided to sculpt the heroic men.



De Weldon invited three men who were believed to be the survivors of the six in the photo to pose for him as he worked on his sculpture. He used photos and physical descriptions of the other three men in his depiction of the three Marines who were killed in action.

In 2016, the U.S. Marine Corps determined that two of the men thought to be in the Rosenthal photo were, in fact, not in it.

It took the Marines three years to investigate the matter and to come up with true identities for the six Marines in the photo.

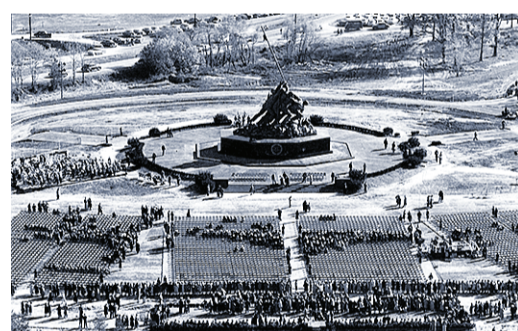
## THE MAKING OF THE MONUMENT

When Congress approved a memorial to the Marine Corps to be erected just to the north of Arlington National Cemetery, the Marine Corps League selected de Weldon as the sculptor. One of the two Marines who agreed to pose for de Weldon — Private Rene Gagnon, shown here — was later determined to not be in the original Rosenthal photo.



Each of the six figures had been built and cast separately. The reassembled figures were bolted and welded together and the entire statue was treated with preservatives. The figures, 32 feet tall, raise a bronze flag pole that's 60 feet tall. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy would order the flag to fly 24 hours a day, every day and in all weather.

De Weldon built his figures from the inside out, with a steel skeleton inside, then sculpted plaster flesh and clothing. Once the 32-foot-tall figures were completed, the entire sculpture was disassembled into 108 pieces and trucked to a foundry in Brooklyn, New York, where it was cast in bronze. This process took nearly three years.



The figures stand on a rock slope above a granite base. The entire completed memorial is about 78 feet tall. The special black granite for the base came from Lönsboda, in southern Sweden. The names and dates of every major Marine Corps engagement since the founding of the Corps in 1775 form a gold ring around the base.

Once cast, the various parts were cleaned, finished and then disassembled again into about a dozen pieces, with the largest weighing more than 20 tons. Those pieces were all loaded onto a convoy of three flatbed trucks and driven to Arlington Ridge Park, across the Potomac from Washington, D.C., and near Arlington National Cemetery.



President Dwight D. Eisenhower — at left with a hat — dedicated the Marine Corps War Memorial in a ceremony on Nov. 10, 1954, the 179th anniversary of the Corps. The entire cost of the statue — about \$850,000 in 1954 dollars — was donated by members and friends of the Marine Corps and members of the Naval Service. No public funds were used.

## ONE OF MANY MEMORIALS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

<b>1 Washington Monument</b> OPENED: 1888	<b>2 John Paul Jones Memorial</b> OPENED: 1912	<b>3 Lincoln Memorial</b> OPENED: 1922	<b>4 Reflecting Pool</b> OPENED: 1923	<b>5 Tidal Basin</b> OPENED: 1943	<b>6 Jefferson Memorial</b> OPENED: 1943	<b>7 John F. Kennedy gravesite</b> OPENED: 1963
<b>8 Constitution Gardens</b> OPENED: 1976	<b>9 Albert Einstein Memorial</b> OPENED: 1979	<b>10 Vietnam War Veterans Memorial</b> OPENED: 1982	<b>11 Korean War Veterans Memorial</b> OPENED: 1995	<b>12 Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial</b> OPENED: 1997	<b>13 World War II Memorial</b> OPENED: 2004	<b>14 Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial</b> OPENED: 2011

Sources: "Arlington National Cemetery" by R. Conrad Stein, National Park Service, U.S. Marine Corps History Division, HistoricAmerica.org, Washington.org, Washington Photo Safari

PHOTO OF IWO JIMA FLAG RAISING BY JOE ROSENTHAL. ALL OTHERS FROM THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.