UNCOMMON VALOR,
COMMON VIRTUE
At last the armies clashed at one strategic point. They slammed their shields together, pike scraped pike. With the grappling strength of fighters armed in bronze. And their round shields pounded, boss on welded boss, And the sound of struggle rocked the earth.

The Iliad, Book 4

They call it the greatest generation, and maybe it was.

One of our best, for sure, ranking right up there with the men and women who wrought the Revolution and the generation of men who fought each other in the War Between the States and afterward rescued the shattered republic from the ashes of victory and the rubble of defeat.

Men have measured themselves by their prowess in battle since the first among us picked up sticks and stones to protect home and hearth, and by that measure, the generation we honor on the Mall is great indeed. But there is more by which we measure the greatest generation. This generation came to maturity as the nation was emerging from depression that imposed a poverty of soul and deprivation of body that succeeding generations can hardly imagine, an era of misery that will always be “the Depression” with the capital D. The generation collected itself, trained itself for war and vanquished evil that faced us across two great oceans — and then organized a peace that for all its frailty has nevertheless kept the world in one piece, if not always in lasting peace.

They’re old now, the boisterous boys of the summers of ’42, ’43 and ’44 and finally the autumn of ’45, when the guns at last fell silent and the survivors on the earth imagined that a lasting stillness had at last embraced us all. The lean, young faces that stare back at us from the old black-and-white photographs, so full of hope and innocent anticipation, have turned now to wrinkled leather. These boys of the ’40s, some now well into their ninth decade, can sometimes barely remember the friends left to sleep in faraway fields, and the sound of musketry and the cries of battle rattle about in half-consciousness as if in a distant dream, “when the sound of struggle rocked the earth.”

These were the boys who became men by learning the hard way how to fight, taking bitter lessons won at Wake Island and Corregidor, at Casablanca and the Kasserine Pass to battlefields with strange and often unpronounceable names that would become legends to join Yorktown and Gettysburg, Argonne Forest and San Juan Hill, Heartbreak Ridge and the Ia Drang Valley as names seared in the nation’s collective memory. New legends would inspire the generations to follow: Anzio, the Cassino, the French beaches given familiar names (Omaha, Utah, Sword, Juno and Gold) and tiny islands of the Pacific (Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Okinawa) that hardly seemed big enough to die on but were big enough to swallow great portions of an entire generation, 400,000 dead before the mushroom clouds at Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended it all, with 700,000 left to nurse their wounds for decades to come.

From the tenements of Brooklyn and the South Side of Chicago and the drive-ins of Southern California, from Tacoma and Boise and Albuquerque and Savannah, the sultry cotton fields and gin yards of the Mississippi Delta and the cornfields of Iowa and the mills of Maine and the production lines of Detroit, and all the places around, among and in between, the nation called its sons (and daughters), 16 million of them, and molded them into the mightiest machine of war that ever man had fashioned.

There had never been an army quite like it, and there surely will never be anything like it again.

— Wesley Pruden
Editor in chief of The Times
Sacrifice is Honored

Memorial a lasting tribute to heroes who saved the world and changed it

By Scott Galupo

T he World War II Memorial, sober and sunk low in a long frame of elms, rests between the two structures that anchor the Mall.

The monument to America's first great warrior, George Washington, towers over it on one side. The statue of America's great unifier, Abraham Lincoln, looks on from the other.

In such company, the location and initial look of the new memorial to those who fought in World War II had its doubters. It would trample on ground consecrated by the civil rights movement, some said. Its design smacked of imperialist architecture, others said.

The controversy, settled in granite and bronze, came down to this: Was World War II — the lives lost, the victories gained — to this: Was World War II — the lives lost, the victories gained — a hinge event of American history, or par with the founding of America itself was their legacy.

“World War II was the seminal event of the 20th century,” says Edward J. Drea, a historian of World War II who lives in Fairfax. “It affected everyone, of every class.”

From December 7, 1941, to Aug. 6, 1945, America spent 400,000 lives beating back German dictator Adolf Hitler’s march across Europe and Japanese Emperor Hirohito’s advance in the South Pacific.

Sixteen million Americans served during the war, fully 10 percent of the population at the time. The movement of so many young men and so much materiel radically reshaped our society.

The country literally was in flux, its industrial capacity energized like never before, its agrarian roots fading further from view. The population migrated northward and, drawn by a humming new industry centered on construction of aircraft, to California.

Global war demanded a rapid acceleration in the technology of weaponry and medicine. Mr. Drea, who focuses on the South Pacific theater in books such as “MacArthur’s Ultra: Codebreaking and the War Against Japan,” notes that the war led to wider use of malaria suppressants such as quinine and the insecticide DDT, which helped stop typhus epidemics.

The United States devoted all its energies to the war, rationing meat, sugar and metals on the home front.

A shortage of shellac, used to manufacture phonograph records, stunted the recording of new music. Short supplies of rubber and gasoline — and trains filled with soldiers — knocked touring musicians off the road. Popular band-leader Glenn Miller sent his own musicians packing to form the Army Air Force Band and died in 1944 when a military flight disappeared over the English Channel.

Yankee legend Joe DiMaggio and movie star Jimmy Stewart joined the war effort at the height of their careers by serving in the Army and Army Air Corps, respectively, and Mr. Stewart became a decorated pilot.

Up to 40 percent of the movies Hollywood cranked out between 1941 and 1945 propagated for the war. Humphrey Bogart squared off against the Nazis in 1943’s “Action in the North Atlantic”; Cary Grant captained a submarine in “Destination Tokyo” the same year; and future president Ronald Reagan teamed with Errol Flynn in 1942’s “Desperate Journey.”

Women flocked to jobs in the men’s absence. Teenagers too young to fight also took jobs, setting in motion a new youth culture that would flourish as veterans and their wives created waves of new children for the next 20 years.

After vanquishing European fascism and Japanese militarism, the postwar nation assumed the leading role in defending the world against the other great poison of the 20th century, the menace of Stalin and expansionist Soviet communism.

Four thousand sculpted golden stars hang on the Freedom Wall.

The self-destruction of Europe created the conditions for the ascendance of the U.S. in world affairs,” Mr. Hanson says, “and, tragically but necessarily, demanded a new responsibility to expend blood and treasure — immediately after our greatest sacrifice — to prevent the Soviet Union from capitalizing on the ruin of Europe.”

Other reverberations were no less significant, from the invention of modern Japan to the reconstruction of Europe, unprecedented acts of statecraft both.

A broad American middle class arose at home, elevated by the GI Bill of Rights and linked, eventually, by a new interstate highway system and the commercial airline industry.

American GIs helped save the world, and those who survived came home still young men, in their early 20s. They were just getting started.

In the 59 postwar years during which the Mall had no World War II memorial, modern America itself was their legacy.

The good war

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously said he “slept the sleep of the saved” after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. A reluctant America, with all its potential industrial might and manpower, finally would tip the balance in the Allies’ favor.

Yet Arnold Krammer, a history professor at Texas A&M University, says it was no sure thing. After World War I, America, isolationist in outlook, dramatically scaled back its standing army and produced little in the way of new weaponry.

“We were unprepared,” Mr. Krammer says. “The American military had 183,000 men and 488 machine guns in 1940.”

Mr. Drea says, “It wasn’t inevitable; no one knew what would happen.”

The number of American conscripts would bloom to 8 million, culled from what Mr. Krammer calls, in a slightly irreverent tweaking of NBC News

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WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

**Pacific**

**Memorial Arches**
Two 43-foot arches serve as markers and entries on the north and south ends of the plaza.

- Arches: 43 feet tall, 23 feet wide, 23 feet deep
- Four bronze columns support four eagles that hold a suspended victory laurel to memorialize the victory of the World War II generation.
- Inscribed on the floor of the arches will be the World War II victory medal surrounded by the years “1941-1945” and the words “Victory on Land,” “Victory at Sea,” and “Victory in the Air.”

**Memorial Plaza**
The plaza and Rainbow Pool are the principal design features of the memorial, unifying all other elements.

- A series of 24 bronze bas relief panels along the ceremonial entrance depicts America’s war years, at home and overseas.

**Commemorative Area**
A commemorative area at the western side of the memorial recognizes the sacrifice of America’s World War II generation and the contribution of our allies.

- Freedom Wall: 34 feet 8 inches wide; 9 feet high from plaza floor; 41 feet 9 inches radius
- A field of 4,000 sculpted gold stars on the Freedom Wall will commemorate the more than 400,000 Americans who gave their lives. During the war, the gold star was the symbol of family sacrifice. Each star is hand crafted, no two are alike, and is approximately 7 inches in diameter.

- Rainbow Pool: 246 feet 9 inches long; 147 feet 8 inches wide
- Two flagpoles flying the American flag will frame the ceremonial entrance at 17th Street.
- Length (back of arch to back of arch): 384 feet
- Width (behind Freedom Wall to bottom of entrance): 279 feet
anchor Tom Brokaw's tribute book, "the bored generation."

“They were coming out of the Great Depression,” Mr. Krammer says. “Here was an opportunity for excitement. It was a chance for most boys to see what the rest of the world looked like. We were, after all, quite a rural country, no matter how many people lived in big cities.

“We were still boys; that’s the crazy thing,” says M.D. Elevitch, 79, a native of Duluth, Minn., who fought in the 94th Division under Gen. George S. Patton. A volume of his correspondence, “Dog Tags Yapping: The WWII Letters of a Combat GI,” was published last month.

“I was totally innocent, inhibited,” Mr. Elevitch recalls.

Still, he adds, in words that might epitomize the mood of the country, “We knew right from the beginning what we needed to do.”

Peter Kuznick, a historian of the 20th century at American University, actively opposed the Vietnam War and remains a fierce critic of nuclear weapons. World War II, he says, is nonetheless unimpeachable.

“If there's ever been a war in history in which one can identify good guys and bad guys, it's World War II,” Mr. Kuznick says.

Mr. Drea adds: “There was never a direct [foreign] threat to the survival of the republic before. At Pearl Harbor, there sure seemed to be one.”

Japan's surprise attack on the Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor mobilized a “sleeping giant,” in Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto’s prophetic phrase.

“It felt to people at the time that this was a great war,” Mr. Kuznick says. “It had to be won, and they were willing to sacrifice.”

‘A giant step’

The approximately 400,000 U.S. troops killed in World War II are second only to the 620,000 Americans, by and large, were united in purpose and passion. The nation won great victories in Europe and the South Pacific. The war generation’s reward was prosperity: college degrees paid for by the federal government; higher salaries; new homes in the suburbs outfitted with modern appliances.

Events didn’t stop churning, however.

Mr. Kennedy writes of the year 1948: “The Russians had just exploded their own atomic bomb, and the Communists had recently taken power in China. Somehow the good war had not settled things to the degree that Roosevelt had promised.”

Today, World War II seems distant to, and perhaps unappreciated by, the children and grandchildren of the war generation.

Mr. Hanson, the military historian, worries about how the war is taught in schools: with laserlike focus on the use of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the internment of Japanese in the United States, to the neglect of climactic battles.

“Very little actual military history is being taught,” he says, “and, thus, most of our youth know only the social or cultural consequences of the war but almost nothing about the war itself.”

“A very sad development, given the amazing sacrifices and skill shown by an entire generation of Americans.”

Even after the battles at the Bulge (December 1944-January 1945), where 19,000 U.S. troops died in the Ardennes forest of the German-Belgian border, and at the island of Okinawa (April-June 1945), where 13,000 died fighting the Japanese — even after these staggering losses, which came at a time when the country was being told the war was almost over, the American public, already tested by a long Depression, didn’t falter.

Has the nation lost the energy — the singleness of purpose, the resolve, the willingness to sacrifice — that marked the World War II era?

“None of us knows,” Mr. Hanson says. “We are in year three of the so-called war on terror, so I suppose we shall soon find out.”
**1939**

**Sept. 1:** World War II begins when Germany invades Poland, using a new technique of warfare called blitzkrieg ("lightning war"). German tank and infantry forces employ speed and surprise to subdue most of Poland by late September.

**Sept. 17:** The Soviet Union, following a secret agreement with Germany, invades Poland from the east and soon occupies the eastern third of the nation.

**November:** The Soviet Union attacks Finland on Nov. 30 and is expelled from the League of Nations a month later. Britain and France seriously consider war against the Soviets to aid Finland.

**September 1939 - March 1940**

On Sept. 3, Poland’s allies, Britain and France, declare war on Germany. However, they do nothing to defend Poland from either Germany or the Soviets. During the “Phony War,” French forces on the Maginot Line face German forces on the Siegfried Line from late 1939 through March of 1940 without real fighting.

**1940**

**March:** Finnish defenses collapse, and the government sues for peace with the Soviets.

**April:** The Phony War ends as Nazi sea and air forces attack Norway and Denmark. Copenhagen falls in 12 hours. Germans eventually install a puppet in Norway, Vidkun Quisling, whose name becomes synonymous with Nazi collaboration.

**May:** With the invasion of Norway, Britain Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who has striven to preserve peace through appeasement of Germany’s territorial demands, is replaced by Winston Churchill, who tells his British countrymen: “I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.”

- Germans invade the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. The Dutch fall in five days. On May 28, King Leopold of Belgium surrenders.
- The Nazis also drive deep into France. The bulk of the British Expeditionary Force and what is left of the French army — more than 300,000 soldiers with their backs against the English Channel — are caught safely along the western coast.
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**June 10:** Italy’s “Il Duce,” Benito Mussolini, declares war against France and Britain. “The British and French … have to learn,” he raves.

**June 22:** In a railroad car at Compiegne, the site of Germany’s surrender in World War I, French delegates accept German terms for peace. A puppet government at Vichy is formed, headed by Marshal Henri Philippe Petain. In less than a year, nearly all of Western and Central Europe has fallen into enemy hands.

**July:** The Battle of Britain, dubbed Operation Sea Lion by Adolf Hitler, begins. Thousands of German warplanes blitz as far north as Scotland across the Atlantic for control of vital sea lanes. In one climactic struggle, the Luftwaffenap by Vichy, headed by Marshal Henri Philippe Petain. In less than a year, nearly all of Western and Central Europe has fallen into enemy hands.

**September:** A desperate Britain concludes the “lend-lease” pact with the United States.

**December:** Nazi troops have advanced 800 miles into Russia, the Russian winter halts the Nazi advance.

**1941**

**January:** With America rapidly shedding its isolationism, Roosevelt makes his famous “Four Freedoms” speech — citing freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. Congress responds by increasing economic aid to Britain.

**March:** Bulgaria and Yugoslavia join the Axis.

**April-May:** Greek resistance collapses, and Germans occupy Athens, hoisting a swastika at the Acropolis.

**May:** British and German merchant vessels fight fierce battles across the Atlantic for control of vital sea lanes. In one climactic struggle, British warships hunt down and sink the German battleship Bismarck.

**May 10:** Rudolf Hess, Hitler’s deputy, flies solo to Scotland hoping to reach a negotiated peace with the British. He is arrested and imprisoned. He ultimately takes his own life in 1987 after decades in Berlin’s Spandau prison.

**June 22:** Germany, with 3 million troops, opens a 2,000-mile front against Russia. By July, Britain and Russia have signed a mutual aid treaty.

**August:** Roosevelt and Churchill meet at sea near Newfoundland and sign the Atlantic Charter, a joint declaration to end Nazi tyranny and a further sign of America’s emergence from isolation.

**September:** Kiev falls to the Germans. The Russians lose 500,000 people in the struggle, and victory costs the Germans 100,000 lives. The Nazis begin a siege of Leningrad that lasts until the winter of 1943.

**December:** Nazi troops have advanced 800 miles into Russia, the Russian winter halts the advance.

**1942**

**January:** Japan captures the Philippines at the battle of Bataan. The Roosevelt administration manages to head off possible espionage.

**February:** After holding out for more than three months against 75,000 U.S. and Philippine Japanese, many of them dying of disease during a forced march, the U.S. forces surrendered.

**April:** Lt. Col. James Doolittle leads a rescue mission to Tokyo, a minor strike that gives the Japanese leaders and 400,000 Japanese Americans, who have seen defeat in battles following a Japanese surrender in Hong Kong.

**May:** In the Battle of the Coral Sea, U.S. forces defeat a Japanese naval force in the Pacific, preventing an invasion of Midway Island.

**June:** Midway in the Pacific is a turning point in the war. Americans, who have seen defeat in battles following a Japanese surrender in the Philippines, turn decisively in the Allied favor. Bernard Montgomery drives toward Rome and is commanded by Gen. Erwin Rommel," from El Alamein and Egypt.

**November:** With the need for a new offensive, Russians begin a w
Feb.: German troops in Stalingrad, Russia, surrender in one of the epic Allied victories of the war.

April 19-May 18: The few thousand remaining Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto stage an armed uprising against Nazi oppressors. The battle ends when SS troops blow up the ghetto synagogue.

May: With the capture of Tunis and Bizerte, Tunisia, the Allies drive the Axis powers out of North Africa, leaving Italy open to invasion.

July: Allied forces make landings on the southern coast of Sicily.

July 19-20: Allied bombers devastate Naples and attack military targets in Rome.

July 25: With half of Sicily in Allied hands and Rome being bombed, Mussolini resigns, ending 21 years of fascism.

Summer: Soviet armies gradually drive back the Nazi invaders, helped by allied bombing of German factories and shipments of thousands of U.S. planes to Russia.

Sept.: Allies cross the Straits of Messina and land in southern Italy.

November: The Germans are in full retreat in the east. The Soviets regain much of their lost territory.

1945

Jan.: Despite stubborn German resistance, the Russians drive into Poland and seize Warsaw and other major cities.

Feb.: An ailing Roosevelt meets Churchill and John Stalin at Yalta, Ukraine, to plan the defeat of Germany and draft the outlines of peace.


February-March: The bloody struggle for two Jima gives the Allies a base within striking distance of the Japanese mainland. Of 30,000 U.S. Marines in the assault, 20,000 are killed or wounded.

March 15: Anne Frank, 15, dies of typhus at the Bergen-Belsen death camp, two months before its liberation.

April 1: American forces invade Okinawa, the fiercest struggle of the Pacific conflict. By June, more than 12,000 Americans and 110,000 Japanese are dead. Kamikaze planes in ict heavy damage to the U.S. fleet. Victory is followed by a massive air offensive against Japanese cities and the remnants of the Japanese fleet.

April: The German army in Italy surrenders unconditionally. Mussolini is killed trying to escape anti-fascist partisans.

April 12: Roosevelt dies of a cerebral hemorrhage at age 63 in Warm Springs, Ga. Vice President Harry S. Truman succeeds him as president.

April 30: Hitler and his bride, Eva Braun, commit suicide. No bodies are ever found.

May 1: With Berlin under siege, German radio announces Hitler is dead.

May 7: German army chiefs go to Eisenhower’s headquarters at a red schoolhouse at Reims and sign an surrender.

May 8: Truman proclaims the end of the war in Europe — V-E (Victory in Europe) Day.

July: The tide in Africa turns. British and American forces move forward in a beachhead area in Normandy, France, on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

The few thousand remaining Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto stage an armed uprising against Nazi oppressors. The battle ends when SS troops blow up the ghetto synagogue.

The Allies land more than 60,000 troops in Italy at Anzio but meet fierce German resistance.

June: Japanese forces in Paris surrender.

June 4: Allied forces enter Rome.

June 6: British and U.S. forces commanded by Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower launch D-Day, the greatest amphibious operation in history, landing 130,000 troops at Normandy, France.

June 16: With an attack on the island of Kyushu, U.S. planes begin a devastating bombing of the Japanese homeland, which continues unabated until the Japanese surrender in the following year.

July 20: The Allies have an army of 1 million men in Europe. That same month, an attempt to assassinate Hitler fails but leaves the dictator partially dead.

July 24: Soviets announce the first discovery of a Nazi death camp at Majdanek, Poland, where more than 1 million Jews and others were slaughtered.

Aug. 4: Otto Frank and his family, hidden for two years in a house on Amsterdam’s Prinsengracht canal, are arrested by the Dutch Nazi police, who leave behind his daughter’s cloth-bound journal, later published as “The Diary of Anne Frank.”

Aug. 25: German forces in Paris surrender. American forces parade up the Champs Elysees.

Sept. 2: Allies liberate Brussels.


Nov.: The 8th Air Force makes its first big raid, on a Focke-Wulf plant at Marienburg, Germany, in 1943.
Civilization itself was under siege in the most devastating conflict in history. Yet through the courage and sacrifice of many, humanity was restored. Nations buried their dead and rebuilt their cities. America, despite her young years, had matured into a superpower to be respected and honored.

More than two-thirds of Europe’s Jews — 6 million in all — plus approximately 5 million other persons considered racially or mentally deficient or politically dangerous were exterminated in the Nazi Party’s pursuit of “racial purification.”

Estimates of civilian deaths are enormous: Soviet Union 7 million, Germany 3.6 million, Japan 800,000 (including 70,000 to 100,000 in Hiroshima and 40,000 in Nagasaki), France 470,000, and Britain 62,000. The United States had almost no civilian deaths.

The gross domestic product, the leading indicator of economic growth, grew from $1.21 trillion in 1941 to $1.78 trillion in 1945. Income for workers increased tremendously during the war. The revenue from taxes soared and was used to pay for the war. The number of U.S. working women climbed from 15 million in 1941 to 19 million in 1945.

Between July 1940 and July 1945, the United States produced 86,338 tanks; 297,000 airplanes; 17.4 million rifles, carbines and sidearms; 315,000 pieces of field artillery and mortars; 4.2 million tons of artillery shells; 41.4 billion rounds of small-arms ammunition; 64,500 landing vessels; 6,500 other naval ships; and 5,400 cargo ships and transports.


The bodies of people who died at Gusen Concentration Camp in Muhlhausen, near Linz, Austria, await burial by German citizens on May 12, 1945.

Hiroshima is in ruins after being leveled by the first atomic bomb used in warfare, on Aug. 6, 1945.

American prisoners of war endure the Bataan Death March (April 10) after their defense of Corregidor in the Philippines.

German soldiers cross the River Maas at Maastricht during the invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940.
A national memorial to honor World War II veterans seemed like a simple, popular and long-overdue idea in 1987, when Rep. Marcy Kaptur first filed a bill calling for its creation. But her bill was just the start of a marathon of authorizing legislation, design considerations, fund-raising challenges and site disputes that ended with last month's unveiling of the $175 million granite monument on the Mall.

The process has “taken 17 years, about four times as long as it took to fight the war,” says Ms. Kaptur, Ohio Democrat. “It’s heartbreaking. This should have passed in 1987. But in the end, we were victorious.”

More than 200,000 people, including President Bush, attended the official dedication of the National World War II Memorial May 29, 2004, during Memorial Day weekend. Among the Mall’s visitors that day were some of the nearly 4 million veterans of the first true global war.

“They’re the most unselfish generation America has ever known,” Mrs. Kaptur says. “That’s why there was no World War II memorial before, because they never asked for it themselves.”

Though slow-going, the memorial project was infused with a sense of urgency — a race against mortality. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, World War II veterans are dying at a rate of a 1,000 a day. More than 16 million survived the war; more than 10 million were alive when the memorial was proposed in 1987.

“As a World War II veteran, I think it’s 60 years too late. It’s about time that memorial came about,” says John Dolibois, 86, a World War II veteran of Cincinnati. “It’s high time, and I think it’s a great honor that, finally, those who fought in World War II will be recognized.”

Born in Luxembourg, Mr. Dolibois is the lone surviving member of Congress from World War II’s generation America has ever known, notes Mrs. Kaptur. “That’s why there was no World War II memorial before, because they never asked for it themselves.”

“Congresswoman, where is the memorial to World War II in Washington?” Mr. Durbin asked. She said it was the Iwo Jima memorial.

As a crowd gathered around, Mr. Durbin explained that the Iwo Jima memorial was dedicated to one battle and one branch of the armed services — the Marine Corps — and was located in Northern Virginia, not the District.

Mrs. Kaptur’s staffresearched the issue, and she proposed a bill to authorize a World War II memorial in the nation’s capital.

It took six years to pass because, Mrs. Kaptur says, a few members of the House wanted to privatize the memorial’s fund raising to give themselves lucrative jobs after they left Congress.

“We had to fight off the wolves — that was probably the most shocking aspect of this,” the 11-term member of Congress says. “There was a lot of money to be made here, and I think people were licking their chops.”

The first $7 million for the memorial’s construction was raised by 1995 through the sale of commemorative government-issued gold coins. The rest eventually was raised through donations to pay for the $175 million monument. An extra $20 million was raised and has been put in a trust to pay for the memorial’s upkeep.

On May 25, 1993, President Clinton signed Public Law 103-32, authorizing the American Battle Monuments Commission to build a World War II memorial in the District or nearby. The memorial’s advisory board originally planned to place it next to Constitution Gardens, close to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. In 1995, however, the board decided to build the memorial on the central axis of the Mall, around the Rainbow Pool and between the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument.

Continued on page 10
Regulations on Mall construction forbid moving the Rainbow Pool, which was built in 1926, but Friedrich St. Florian, architect of the memorial, found a loophole.

"It didn't say anything about lowering the pool," says the memorial's project executive, Barry Owenby. "It was a good loophole."

Mr. St. Florian designed a sunken granite plaza surrounding the pool, with 56 pillars, representing the wartime U.S. states and territories, forming parentheses on the south and north ends, anchored by two 43-foot memorial arches, representing the Atlantic and Pacific theaters.

The site selection drew heavy criticism from those who said it would ruin or disrupt the Mall's open space and the view between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial.

"If we don't have our public space and our commons, where do we go to celebrate, to demonstrate?" asked Judy S. Feldman, president of the National Coalition to Save Our Mall. The group was incorporated in 2000 and has two vice presidents who are World War II veterans.

The American Battle Monuments Commission broke ground on the new memorial in November 2000, but construction was delayed in March 2001 by a lawsuit filed by Mrs. Feldman's group. Congress settled the issue two months later when it passed legislation ordering construction to begin immediately.

Construction got under way in August 2001. The most difficult part was building a slurry wall around the perimeter of the memorial, which sits on 7.4 acres. The slurry wall is similar to the one installed at the World Trade Center area in New York City after the September 11 attacks. It is 2 feet thick and goes to a depth of about 38 feet; the World Trade Center slurry wall is 3 feet thick and extends to a depth of about 80 feet.

"It's the same principle: You're keeping water out," Mr. Owenby says.

By February 2003, construction crews had built the memorial's slurry wall, its labyrinthine tunnels 30 feet underneath the plaza and its concrete base.

Then came the granite — 17 million pounds, or 8,500 tons, of it. There was white granite from North Carolina, a darker "green" granite from Brazil for the squares in the plaza and black granite from California for the pool.

Visitors' reviews of the memorial have been overwhelmingly positive, though Mrs. Feldman retains her criticisms after visiting April 29, the National World War II Memorial's opening day.

"We're going to live with it. It's there. The fountain is beautiful, but of course the fountain was there to begin with," she says.

"You have to imagine August. Sunken plaza, no trees, no wind. Then you have to imagine January. No water, no fountains and cold. It's a memorial that's going to have attractive character for maybe six months of the year," Mrs. Feldman says.

Bob and Dottie Tull of Falls Church dropped their objections to the memorial after visiting it on opening day. Mr. Tull, 78, a World War II veteran, and Mrs. Tull, 76, thought the memorial would interrupt the view between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument.

"I thought it was going to look awful," Mrs. Tull says. "It's not as obtrusive as we thought it could have been."

Mr. Owenby, when told of comments like the Tulls', says, "There's nothing like Saul on the Damascus road.

"Regardless of who said what, the memorial speaks for itself now, which is another great thing about democracy. You decide," he says.

Yet with the memorial built, one question remains.

"Why did it take so long? When the guys came home from World War II, they had the parades, the GI Bill; everybody loved them, and they were just concerned with getting on with their lives," Mr. Owenby says. "They didn't need a memorial.

"The closer we got to the end of the century, the more we started thinking about World War II, because it was the seminal event of the 20th century." Mr. Owenby says the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, opened in 1982, was needed to heal a divided nation. Mike Duggan, 67, who served two tours as an Army officer in Vietnam from 1966 to 1969, agrees but says the World War II Memorial still should have come first.

"It maybe should have been our first monument," Mr. Duggan says. "The other side of that is that the Vietnam vets never got their parades. The World War II vets, they had the gratitude of the country.

"When you consider what they did in four years, they basically took on the world. It's just amazing. We'll probably never see anything like it again," he says.

About 65 percent of the 117,000 tickets distributed for the May 29, 2004 dedication were given to veterans. There were about 7,000 first-come, first-served tickets and 25,000 to 30,000 standing-room spaces on the Mall. The waiting list for tickets was about 50,000 people.

"It's a big deal for a lot of us old buggers," says CBS newsman and "60 Minutes" host Mike Wallace, who was a Navy communications officer from 1943 to 1946.

"It's incredibly significant because it's recognition within their lifetimes that the country now understands the trauma of this warfare," says Joe Balkowski, official historian of the 29th Infantry Division. "It's an understanding they deeply appreciate, that within their lifetimes it's finally recognized that the trauma they experienced was a necessary price for the ultimate victory.

The 29th Infantry Division, comprising soldiers from the D.C. region, landed on Omaha Beach in France on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The division lost 2,000 of its 14,000 soldiers that day.

Still, many of those who survived never got to see the memorial that commemorates their heroism and self-sacrifice. That includes Mr. Durbin, the Ohio man who asked his congressional representative at a fish fry in 1987 why there was no national World War II monument.

He died at age 79 in 2000, four months before ground was broken on the memorial.

Mrs. Kaptur says that when she stands on the memorial's dedication platform eight days from now, she will remember something Mr. Durbin said to her to fight discouragement.

"Roger said, 'I want it for my grandchildren, so they will come to know the causes for which I fought.' This was for the future. He was very focused on the next generation. I have to keep that in mind as I'm very bittersweet about the time that's passed," she says.
The entire National World War II memorial can be seen from the top of the Washington Monument.