

A CLOSER LOOK
HALLOWED GROUNDS: 150 YEARS OF HONOR
INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN CARNEY

Stephen Carney:

This is the very first military burial ground clarity...

Gail McCabe:

Steven Carney is command historian in Arlington national Cemetery. He lives for American history especially that of the U.S. military.

Stephen Carney:

...and here is where it all began. This is the grave of Pvt. William Chrisman who was buried on May 13, 1864.

The cemetery began when there was no burial space left in Washington D.C. There were so many wounded and sick Soldiers coming into the hospitals in the DC area, it outgrew the capacity for cemeteries.

Gail McCabe:

The time was the mid-1800s, the end of the civil war, a bloody period of American history when South fought against the North.

Stephen Carney:

It became a cemetery when by 1864; the national cemeteries that had been established here were simply filled really beyond capacity, but right across the Potomac you had 1100 acres of essentially untouched estate that was unsuitable for a burial ground and was very close to the district to actually be able to get out here.

Gail McCabe:

So this was borne out of necessity.

Stephen Carney:

It was definitely born out of necessity and that necessity began really at the beginning of May 1864, so our very first military burial here was May 13, 1864.

Gail McCabe:

Now, I've also read that Arlington was a reconciliation point between North and South in that time.

Stephen Carney:

So from the very beginning, there were Confederate Soldiers buried here at the cemetery, but in 1900, the cemetery truly does become a symbol of reconciliation because Congress authorized the creation of a Confederate section.

Today we call it section 16 year. In the year 1900, a large amount of pedestrian traffic would have entered on the western side of the cemetery and have gone right past the Confederate

section. In 1906, Congress authorized the creation of a Confederate Memorial at that section and the memorial itself is called the new South, definitely a powerful symbol here at Arlington National Cemetery.

Gail McCabe:

This is where I think a lot of military leaders chose to be buried with their men.

Stephen Carney:

When a lot of those leaders, a lot of the officers of the Civil War begin passing away, so many of them decided to be buried here with their troops, section one of our cemetery today really overlooks what we refer to as what was called at the time, “The Field of The Dead.”

Today in section 13, but it became the primary burial ground for a majority of our Civil War dead. You see the same thing, then coming into the 20th century. General Pershing is buried in section 34, he wanted a simple Soldier’s marker and he wanted to be buried at a spot where he could overlook the men that he led, the men who’d served him so well during the first World War.

Gail McCabe:

Arlington also is known historically as where Memorial Day began.

Stephen Carney:

The Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, which was the veteran service organization of the Civil War, it was open to all veterans of the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines and Revenue Cutter Service, which today would be the Coast Guard and it was their commander-in-chief, who issued a general order recognizing May 30th as Decoration Day, so that very first Decoration Day here at Arlington National Cemetery in 1868 was a tremendously popular event. Within a few years, there were over twenty five thousand individuals coming to decorate and to honor 16,000 or so Civil War dead that were buried here.

Gail McCabe:

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, how did that begin?

Stephen Carney:

There wasn't an original plan to have a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier here at Arlington National Cemetery. Our Memorial amphitheater was constructed between 1915 and 1920 nineteen twenty because of the popularity of Memorial Day here at the cemetery. There was no plan to add the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier here, but in 1920 on Armistice Day- Nov. 11, the British and the French both started a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier or Tomb of the Unknown Warrior at Westminster Abbey to honor their World War I dead so early 1921, Congress authorizes the United States to also construct a tomb, it was decided Arlington National Cemetery was the most appropriate location.

The tomb was an add-on to the original plan for the Memorial amphitheater.

Gail McCabe:

And now you are marking the 150th year, another piece of history.

Stephen Carney:

Absolutely. It's been an incredible 150 years and Arlington isn't just the place to come to honor the dead, but it's also a place for the living, as well. That's one of the important things about the cemetery is the Explore piece, something that we think of every day, how can we enrich, how can we enable our three and half-million or more tourists that come here every day to get out and to explore the history that is Arlington National Cemetery.

There is just so much here. There's such a vast history. I really want people to take away an appreciation of just how many individuals served and sacrificed for our nation, not just the veterans but their families as well.

A CLOSER LOOK

HALLOWED GROUNDS: 150 YEARS OF HONOR

INTERVIEW WITH SGT. MAJ. JAMES BODECKER

Gail McCabe:

If you spend any amount of time at Arlington National Cemetery, you can't help but be touched by the traditions that are such an integral part of the fabric of the place.

[Color Guard: "Present arms!"]

CSM James BoDecker:

Tradition at Arlington National Cemetery is synonymous with the old guard. The oldest active duty regiment in the Army, tracing its roots back to 1784.

Tradition is was one of the most important things we have, to carry on the legacy of military

Gail McCabe:

Command Sergeant Major James BoDecker says being a member of the old guard gives him a deeper perspective on service to the nation.

You're a combat veteran of both Iraq and Afghanistan. You're now here and national Cemetery, does that make it more personal?

CSM James BoDecker:

Absolutely. I have friends; fellow Soldiers that I've served with that now lay at rest here. I still keep in contact with telephone some of the family members. So to be here and watch over them on a daily basis means a lot.

Gail McCabe:

Arlington is the premier national military cemetery. A final resting place for U.S. service members who served the nation since the Civil War. Today, more than 400,000 veterans and their dependent family members are buried at the cemetery.

From sunrise to sunset, 24/7, 365 days a year, roughly 1,500 Soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Regiment, the Old Guard, here to pay homage as recognized presenters of honor, respect and tribute to America's fallen.

The millions of people that come to Arlington, what do you see in their faces?

CSM James BoDecker:

I don't think that they exactly understand the magnitude and the size and the atmosphere that's here. So when they get here, I think it kind of overwhelms them at times.

Gail McCabe:

So as we get ready to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of Arlington National Cemetery, where do traditions fit into this.

CSM James BoDecker:

Every day, traditions fit into everything we do every day here. From the president's salute battery to the funerals to the firing parties to Memorial Day, Flag Day, flags in, flags out. It's everything.

Gail McCabe:

Do you think that once you leave here, your time served here in Arlington will leave a definitive stamp on you?

CSM James BoDecker:

Absolutely it will. Yes, it's changed the way I've thought about things. Its changed the way how I've viewed families in the grieving process...

[Taps playing]

...taps means a lot.

When we conduct funerals, it always brings me back to the Memorial services we conducted in Afghanistan, Iraq, as command sergeant major , we're responsible for those ceremonies.

Whenever I hear those it just brings me back to all those Soldiers we've conducted memorial services for.

I think it's all tied together, I see it as America paying respect to the service members. This is the place where when it's time for me to go, this is where I want to be. It definitely ha left it's impression on me.

A CLOSER LOOK
HALLOWED GROUNDS: 150 YEARS OF HONOR
INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK HALLINAN

Patrick Hallinan:

I walk these grounds everyday and look at the headstones and they speak to me...

They talk about the service and sacrifice of generations of Americans. It speaks to our heritage. I know that there are true Americans and heroes buried here.

Gail McCabe:

Patrick Hallinan is Army national military cemeteries, executive director. He says it's his calling, his mission.

I'm moved by it. To me, their physical symbols of the people that secured our liberty, defended our freedoms, and protect us to this very day.

Gail McCabe:

So when you walk through this cemetery you see the people and I mean, there are thousands of people that come here.

You would look at people's faces, see emotions, reflections.

Patrick Hallinan:

On any given day, we probably average three-four million tourists a year. Then we have over three thousand ceremonies from the president of the United States to dignitaries around the world that come and pay their respects at Arlington National Cemetery, but the interactions, you're right, to young children learning their history, you see family members coming to visit, and you see comrades coming back to visit and also when you speak to the emotions, I deal with the loved ones in the recent conflict, so, yes, on just about every human emotion is on display.

This should be a place where people feel comfortable to pay their respects and to grieve.

Gail McCabe:

I'm curious, I was reading your bio and it says that you literally started working with cemeteries in the field.

Patrick Hallinan:

When I came home from the Marine Corps and I returned to New York, took a position with the National Cemetery Administration, and started out as a basic laborer and figured it was only a short time job until I finish my education and moved onto something else, but I was captured by the mission and passionate about the mission.

I saw it as a continuation of service to my comrades and also service to the nation on behalf of the nation can also serve as the donation on behalf of the nation.

Gail McCabe:

What is the size of Arlington national Cemetery today?

Patrick Hallinan:

Arlington is approximately 624 acres today.

Gail McCabe:

So, how many military are buried here?

Patrick Hallinan:

There are over 400,000 military and independent family members.

Gail McCabe:

There are also a number of notable civilians buried here?

Patrick Hallinan:

Many notable are civilians buried here, you have Chief Justice Thurgood Marshall, Chief Justice Holmes, President JFK... along with military generals of course. You have Gen. "Black Jack" Pershing, Gen. John Jimmy Doolittle to Gen. Bradley.

Gail McCabe:

Just to get a prospective how many national military cemeteries are there?

Patrick Hallinan:

There are many national military cemeteries. All international Cemeteries, the Soldiers and Airmen home belong to the Department of the Army. There are approximately 131 national cemeteries with the Department of Veterans Affairs national Cemetery Administration.

There are also the overseas military cemeteries such as the one at Utah and Omaha Beach in Normandy that people are familiar with.

Gail McCabe:

Why is this one the national military cemetery, the one that we know so well?

Patrick Hallinan:

When they started the original interment here, many of the generals and officers wanted to be interred among the troops became a tradition renowned public citizens are interred here. It's built upon that foundation and that tradition.

Also , the nation first cast its eyes upon Arlington to recognize what has become Memorial Day and also to stop and pause, it shows respect for those that served so it began here and has continued to this day.

Gail McCabe:

Now today we have eligibility requirements to be buried here...

Patrick Hallinan:

You have to two types of burials here, you having in-ground interment, which can be casket or cremation. In-ground burials is probably the most restricted, to qualify for in-ground burial would be active-duty, retired military, retired reservist receiving a pension, all those discharges of course the last period of service would have been honorable and also those who received the valor awards so if you are a recipient of the Medal Of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished service medal, Silver star or the Purple Heart, you would be eligible for in-ground burial. If not, if you had served your country for four years like I did and received an honorable discharge, you'd be eligible for inurnment in the column bearing.

Gail McCabe:

Being the Executive Director at what is a national treasure, 150 years being commemorated this year, that's an incredible responsibility.

Patrick Hallinan:

It's a tremendous responsibility, but it's also one I'm honored by and more importantly humbled by. When I started out as that young man digging graves by hand that I realized I'd wind up at this stage life. No, far from it, but as it's a passion of mine and it's led me on this journey and after forty years of the journey, I've been privileged and honored to be at Arlington, and I'm just a caretaker, humble steward of the mission.

Gail McCabe:

You walked the grounds and every tombstone still tells you a story.

Patrick Hallinan:

Every headstone when I read the information. I see the backgrounds of different religious denominations, the war periods, the time they served tells me about generations of service and sacrifice to the nation.

I know being here that everyone here is someone's hero and if you come onto Arlington National Cemetery, and these stones don't speak to you and you're not moved. I'd be surprised.

304 Medal of Honor Recipients here, there are four multiple Medal of Honor recipients so there are true heroes here.

Gail McCabe:

The public is invited to join in the commemoration of 150 years of Arlington national Cemetery. The anniversary will be marked with numerous events throughout the year. All are welcome to attend and learn more about these hallowed grounds.