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# Collective and Individual Identities of Soldiers at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial

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**Abstract**

The Florence American Cemetery and Memorial, located outside of Florence, Italy, is the final resting place of 4,402 American soldiers who died during World War II while fighting in the Tuscan region after the liberation of Rome in June 1944. In addition to those buried, 1,409 soldiers are commemorated on the Wall of the Missing. By joining the military, these men (and women) became a part of the larger military family. Such a process ensured that their individual identities would become intertwined with that of a collective military identity. However, it was their biological kin, the family that remained in the United States, who made the decision to have their loved ones remains buried abroad instead of returned home. By doing so, the biological family relinquished their ability to regularly visit and provide care for the dead. In the ensuing years, an adoptive family arose at the cemetery. Groundskeepers, cemetery supervisors, and local community members took on the role of day-to-day care that the biological family was unable to provide.

During my time studying the cemetery, the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II took place. Despite the passage of time, the deaths of these soldiers have not been forgotten. Rather, the existence of such sites as the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial has become ever more important as the number of those alive during World War II rapidly declines. This site acts as a link between the past and the present, a physical reminder of the scale of death and loss of life resulting from war.

## Executive Summary

The Florence American Cemetery and Memorial (FACM) is the resting ground of 4,402 American soldiers who died in the Tuscan region after the Allies captured Rome during World War II. It is one of 25 cemeteries that are maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission. The cemetery was first established in 1961 and has been open to the public ever since. The individuals buried or commemorated on the Wall of the Missing died during the final year of the war. May 2015 marked the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, heightening attention to places such as the FACM.

The FACM and the individuals buried there are part of an entangled kinship network.[1] When the soldiers left for war, many left behind family, never to be seen again. Starting from when a soldier enlists in the military, the family and soldier had to renegotiate their relationship; the family had to figure out how to deal with first the ephemeral loss of their loved one as he fought in the war, then the permanent loss when he was killed overseas. After joining the military, the soldier would form new ties with men, both from the United States and other Allied nations. The military kinship acted as an extension to the missing biological family. After the soldier died, the biological family had to decide whether his body should be brought home and laid to rest with his biological family, or remain in Italy to be buried alongside his military brethren. Once the individual was buried at the cemetery, the development of adopted kinship[2] began, via both the people of the local Italian community and the Americans who oversaw the

[1] This network of kinship includes the biological, military, and adopted kinships, which begins with a soldier's enlistment, but becomes increasingly more intertwined after a soldier has been buried at the FACM.

[2] "Adopted kinship" is the phrase I use referring to those individuals with no blood or military relation to the deceased. The adopted family only knows the soldier as a deceased member of the FACM.

care and maintenance of the space. Although those who are part of the adopted kinship category never knew these individuals in life, they have become an integral part of the cemetery community, ensuring the deceased are well cared for and remembered when those who knew the deceased are unable to personally do so. The biological, military, and adopted forms of kinship of the deceased at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial represent the familial transitions soldiers went through from their home in the United States, being a member of the American military, then buried alongside his military brothers. The soldiers maintained these different forms of kinship, even in death, though an emphasis in form has shifted across their respective life and death courses.

I spent the spring semester of 2015 studying in Florence, staying an extra month in the city so as to be present at the FACM Memorial Day ceremony. Throughout the course of these five months, I visited the FACM eleven times. I began each visit by walking among the graves of the deceased, taking note of anything that made a particular grave stand out. This included bouquets of flowers, small stones placed on Jewish graves, or disturbances in the ground itself. After I finished my walkthrough of the cemetery and memorial, I visited the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and assistant in the administrative office. I would ask them any questions that arose throughout the course of my visits. Additionally, they would provide me with a more general history of World War II in the Tuscan region. During my visits, I kept notes in a journal. Immediately upon my return home after visiting the FACM, I rewrote my field notes in a word document, including the images taken with captions.

Upon starting the writing process for this thesis, I drew from texts outlining the history of World War II, as well as a variety of anthropological works, including discussions on fictive

kinship, military statues, and ethnographic research on the visitors of cemeteries and their interactions with the deceased.

According to the assistant superintendent of the FACM, the main role of the administrators is to ensure the continued memory of the deceased, which includes finding out as much as possible about each of the person's life. This thesis is part of the larger project of the FACM. While the FACM is focused upon the history of individuals, I include the continued postmortem identity of the soldiers. Additionally, the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II occurred while I was studying in Florence. I attended the Memorial Day ceremony at the FACM in May. Despite the large numbers in attendance, there were few World War II veterans at the ceremony. As the number of living World War II veterans continues to dwindle, the duty to remember the dead and sacrifices of war shifts to the living, including the workers of the FACM and thesis papers such as this one.

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**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my faculty advisor, Dr. Shannon Novak for helping to mold this general idea of researching an Italian cemetery into a solidified project, as well as spending countless hours reading and providing feedback on drafts. Thank you to my reader, Dr. Azra Hromazdic, for providing a fresh set of eyes and insight in editing this capstone. My research at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial would have been wholly incomplete if not for the lengthy discussions with the FACM superintendent, assistant superintendent, and assistant. They were able to provide me with a comprehensive understanding of both the day-to-day activities at the cemetery, as well as the relevant history of both the region during World War II and how the FACM came to be established. Lastly, I would like to thank the Syracuse University Renee Crown Honors Program for providing this opportunity and help to fund my research in Italy.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

"Al cimitero americano," I say to the bus driver as we journey down an Italian road outside of Florence. "Sì, sì," he responds with a wave of his hand. The bus slows to a halt at the entrance to the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial (FACM) and I disembark along with two older American couples.

We walk down the drive towards the cemetery (Fig. 1). I begin my tour of the cemetery by walking amongst the graves, noting anything that makes a particular grave stand out. This can range from objects of mourning, such as flowers or stones placed before a grave, to a difference from the norm in landscaping. I talk with others wandering through the cemetery, asking the reason for their visit. While some give a brief, generic answer, many more wanted to have an in depth conversation as to why they specifically wanted to visit the FACM and what it means to them. After these conversations, I visit the administrative office where I talk to the workers there, I ask questions that arose during my walk through the site, about the FACM more generally, and we discuss the history of World War II in Tuscany.

**Figure 1: The layout of the FACM. The graves are divided into sections A-H. The memorial and Wall of Missing is located at the top of the hill in the center behind sections G and H. (photo from FACM Visitor Brochure)**

World War II resulted in the deaths of over 400,000 Americans. Having sacrificed their lives for their country, it became the responsibility of the American government to oversee that these men and women were properly laid to rest. While 61% of these Americans killed throughout the course of the war were returned to the United States to be buried either in a local or military cemetery, 39% remained abroad, buried in one of the American military cemeteries established for World War II soldiers. One such cemetery is the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial, located outside of Florence Italy. The FACM is the final resting place of 4,402 Americans, in addition to the 1,409 commemorated on the Wall of the Missing. Despite more than 70 years having passed since their deaths, the military identity of the soldiers buried at the FACM remains present, both as individuals and as a collective unit. An extension of this identity involves the living forging new relationships with the deceased, especially those local patrons

who continue to care for the dead. This process, I will argue, alters familial bonds and form new ties between the living and the dead.

This thesis will take a multiscalar approach to examine the FACM and the continued evolution of soldier identity and forms of kinship. At the macro scale, the collective military identity is most prevalent when considering the thousands of gravestones and names upon the Wall of the Missing, representing the deaths of thousands of American soldiers. At the other end of the spectrum, I will rely on a micro scale to explore a single biography, that of Staff Sergeant George Keathley. His life, particularly his service in the military, will serve as a basis for examining the effects World War II had on individual identity. Throughout the rest of this paper, I will draw upon Keathley and his story, using him as an example for the discussion at hand.

While the mortal remains of the soldiers, including Keathley, are unquestionably significant, they are buried, thus making them invisible to the visitors of the FACM. Instead, what is visible are the gravestones and the Wall of the Missing. These stones, I will argue, come to represent the deceased individual, while still maintaining their collective contribution to service in the military as the predominant feature of their identity. Upon entering the FACM, one immediately sees the thousands of white crosses in neat rows on a hillside with the memorial at the top of the hill. The organization and the visual impact of the FACM will be discussed in depth later.

In the following chapter, I will provide a brief overview of World War II. I will begin with an explanation as to how the United States joined the conflict on the side of the Allies after over two years of actively avoiding a direct military involvement. Drawing upon American writer Francis Trevelyan Miller's (1945) and Marvin Perry's (2013) works, on the history of World War II, I outline the battles of the American 5$^{th}$ Army and British 8$^{th}$ Army as they invade

Sicily and work their way up the Italian peninsula, pushing back the Germans and their defenses. Following this, I discuss the political struggle within Italy, specifically looking at the time after Prime Minister Benito Mussolini was voted out of office and replaced by a military government and the repercussions this had on Italian military allegiance. Next the United States Armed Forces and its formation will be considered, including an overview of the United States draft and the typical course taken to become a soldier immediately following enlistment. The last section of this chapter discusses the history of military cemeteries in the United States, dating back to the Civil War. The remains of American World War II soldiers were recovered and identified by the United States federal government both during and after the war. The next of kin of the deceased could decide whether to have the remains repatriated or buried at one of the American cemeteries established in World War II. The rest of this paper will examine one such cemetery, the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial (FACM).

Chapter 2 considers the continued military identity of the soldiers buried and commemorated at the FACM. Drawing from forensic archaeologist Lyla Renshaw's (2011) work on military dead, I will discuss the process through which military cemeteries came to be established and accepted in Europe after World War II as sites of pilgrimage for Americans and Europeans alike. The cemetery, when considered as only a fraction of the total deaths during World War II, illustrates the sheer scale of loss of life that occurred. The ties of fictive kinship soldiers established with each other in life continue on after death. The shared residence of the deceased at the FACM solidifies the military fictive kinship. A predominant theme within the American military is to leave no man behind. This, they were ensured, holds true both in life and death. Thus, a soldier could die at peace, they and their family comforted by the promise that almost any measure would be taken to give the body a proper permanent resting place. I end this

chapter questioning the identity of the soldier after death; do they revert to their civilian identity or is a collective military identity imposed on them forevermore? Rather than a binary, this identity is a more complex mis, part of which includes religion, which must be renegotiated to fit within a narrow set of standards outlined by the American Battle Monuments and Commission.

In the following chapter, the focus moves from the soldier to those who continue to visit and care for the deceased at the FACM. At the FACM, the people who care for the dead do not have a blood relation to them. Instead, the FACM has posthumously adopted the deceased, taking on the role of caretaker and mourner when the biological kin cannot. Drawing from Doris Francis and colleague's (2005) work on mourners at cemeteries years after the deceased passed away, I consider the continued care and upkeep of the FACM and its permanent residents. Those who continue to care for the deceased include cemetery workers, visitors, and local Italians who have adopted a grave. The primary role of the cemetery workers is to ensure the life and sacrifice of these soldiers is not forgotten with the passage of time. The visitors to the FACM, particularly Americans, feel an obligation to visit and pay their respects, serving as a representative for the blood family that cannot visit their loved one. Local Italians adopt a grave, making it their duty to visit the grave of a specific soldier regularly and care for its upkeep. In choosing to have their soldier buried at the FACM, the blood family relinquished their ability to regularly visit and provide in person care for the deceased. Therefore, they placed their trust upon those who did have continued access to the FACM to care for their loved one, including overseeing the upkeep of the grave.

The military identity of these soldiers began with their enlistment in the American Armed Forces. Using Keathley as an archetypal soldier, I will examine this military identity, considering these men and women as both individuals and as part of the larger collective identity of the

FACM and the military as a whole. Death does not disrupt the formation of new relations, as exhibited by the ties formed between those who interact with the dead at the FACM today.

# Chapter 2

## Multiple Scales of Identity at the FACM

The Florence American Cemetery and Memorial is located outside of Florence, Italy. It is a cemetery for American World War II soldiers who died after the liberation of Rome, fighting in the Tuscan region. 4,402 soldiers are buried there and 1,409 are commemorated on the Wall of the Missing. The FACM will be examined at multiple scales, providing different perspectives and insights from these various vantage points. At the macro scale, I will consider the collective identity of those buried and commemorated. At a more focused micro scale, I will attend to the life of an individual soldier and how he came to be buried at the FACM. The collective and individual identities of soldiers are intricately intertwined, as the individual's life and death is multiplied thousands of times over within the FACM. Although the specifics of an individual's life and death may vary, the overarching picture, that of an American who dies while fighting in Italy, remains the same. Anthropologist Shannon Novak's (2016) work will be drawn upon to consider how individuals and their biographies shed light on wider society and institutional structures at the time of their deaths (Novak 2016). Specifically, I will focus on Staff Sergeant George Keathley to provide an image of an individual life course, an archetypal American soldier, and one of the many whose mortal remains came to rest in a military cemetery in Florence, Italy.

## Collective Identity at the FACM

Walking across the bridge into the FACM is an awe-inspiring sight. After crossing over the Greve River, one is struck by the image of the over 4,000 marble white gravestones aligned in perfectly neat rows working their way up the green hillside (Fig. 2). The perfect order and maintenance of the FACM in and of itself expresses a respect for the deceased (Francis et al

2005). This impeccable arrangement of the FACM is demonstrative of the continued care and devotion the living have towards those who sacrificed their lives throughout the course of World War II. The cemetery is split in half by a walkway going up the hill. At the top of the hill stands a memorial, which includes a large obelisk and the Wall of the Missing with the names of over 1,000 men. Like the gravestones on the hillside, the names on the Wall of the Missing are remarkable based on sheer abundance. Despite the absence of a body, these missing men are commemorated in the nearly same manner as those buried at the FACM. That is, every man on the Wall of the Missing is listed alphabetically, followed by rank, division, and date of enlistment. The date of death is unlisted for those on the Wall of the Missing for obvious reason. However, those on the Wall of the Missing lack individual gravestones, thus taking away their individuality, to a degree (Schofield 2005).

**Figure 2: The view of the FACM near the entrance (photo by author)**

When looking at the FACM as a whole, the individual soldier is lost in the masses. This individual loss in the face of the many allows for the formation of a collective group identity at the FACM, specifically that of a collective identity based upon the shared military experience.

Although the deceased may not have known in life any of the other men buried at the FACM, they all share the same basic status as a member of the American military who died during the course of World War II. At the FACM, nearly everyone is equal in death. Regardless of rank, race, age, gender, or any other type of social identifier used in life, the soldiers at the FACM are given the same burial. The only exception to this pattern is the graves of two Medal of Honor recipients, whose gravestones will be discussed later.

In contrast to the perfectly neat rows of gravestones, the organization of who is buried where is completely random. The only exception in this case is two sets of brother buried beside one another. For the vast majority, however, there appears to be equity. There is no area set aside for commissioned officers or other people of note; anyone can seemingly be buried next to anyone else. In the decision to not organize the deceased by any sort of social stratification, the collective identity of the military is brought to the fore. The civilian societal structure, and even military rank is inconsequential in death. Rather, it is the shared military experience of having fought and died in Italy that is significant.

There are two bronze statues of soldiers honoring the memory of their fallen comrades at the FACM; the first is of the 363rd Regiment, 91st Division and overlooks Plot A of the FACM and the second is of the 361st Regiment of the 91st Division, overlooking Plot B (Figs. 3). Originally, these statues were located in other towns in Italy. However, they were subjected to vandalism and subsequently moved to the FACM with the consent of the regiments (ABMC Booklet). As is common in representations of the soldier's body, these statues at the FACM are in reflective stances, their guns held upwards, rather than in some form of defensive stance (Moriarty 1995). These statues are illustrative of the archetypal soldier, that of "youth, strength, and masculinity, but also imagines the soldier's body as a site of endurance, suffering, and

sacrifice," (Renshaw 771). They come to represent every man that is buried at the FACM, dressed in their combat uniform and loaded down with their military equipment, they serve as an image through which the visitors of the FACM can gain an understanding of the "living" soldier, albeit in an idealized form. Moreover, the statues are of whole men, men who have not been physically mangled by warfare like many of the bodies buried there.

In juxtaposition to these soldiers immortalized in stone, the physical bodies of many of the individuals interred at the FACM were so altered by warfare that their individual self was no longer identifiable (Novak 2016:23). The individuals at the FACM died in violent manners, their bodies torn apart by enemy artillery.[3] These mangled bodies were subsequently buried in a temporary military cemetery. For many, years passed between the time of initial interment and their exhumation to be reburied at the FACM.[4] During this time, the body would have decomposed, making the individual's physical appearance even more unrecognizable. Other means, including burial records and clothing markers would need to be used to identify the body. However, throughout the entire identification process, the individual's identity as a member of the American military is undisputed; remnants of an American military uniform on the body would be adequate in the identification of citizenship.

The faces of the statues are somber, taking on the role of demonstrating feelings of loss and showing the psychological impact of having watched many others die. It is the timeless youth and perfection of these statues that stands in marked contrast to the remains buried below and out of sight (Renshaw 2011). While one represents the archetypal soldier in perpetuity, the other goes through the process of decay. This decay serves to further segregrate the body

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[3] Approximately 291,000 of the total 400,000 American casualties of World War II were killed in combat.

[4] The process of burying soldiers and then disinterring them at a later date is discussed in depth in another chapter.

immortalized in bronze and the body left to deteriorate. The physical bodies of the soldiers are ephemeral, but the bronze statues endure time. When there is nothing left of the mortal remains, their sacrifice will continue to be remembered by the stone and metal memorials. These statues are trapped in time, always a young, perfect soldier. Those buried at the FACM are both trapped in time, their bodies never experiencing the 'normal' process of aging and dying at the end of a long life. Rather, they accelerated through time, having met their death early. At the same time, their lives had been cut short and the process of decay occurred long before succumbing to a "natural" death.

**Figure 3: American soldier of the 361st Infantry, 91st Division (photo by author)**

Like the bronze statues, the gravestones themselves are enduring physical representations of the sacrifice of life during World War II (Fig. 4). A gravestone's purposes is to name and honor the deceased and designate a specific space for people to visit and mourn (Francis et al 2005). By placing a name upon the grave, the stone that is otherwise identical to the thousands of

others becomes individualized (Schofield 2005). Names serve to individualize those who would otherwise be a part of the collective military identity. These individual names indicate a life that has since ended (Laqueur  2015). The seeming endurance of the marble gravestone is in fact dependent upon constant human attention. The marble "should remain whole, clean, and white, resisting signs of weathering and decay…serves as a metaphor for the upkeep of the name and memory of the deceased" (Francis et al 2005:113). At the FACM, gravestones are regularly replaced to prevent signs of weathering upon the stone. This illusion of marble as permanent and enduring is paralleled in the bones of the human body; what is initially assumed to be impervious to wear is actually vulnerable to disintegration if given enough time. Like the marble gravestones that deteriorate, the remains of the deceased at the FACM may endure for a period, but will eventually decompose. The difference between the marble and the bones is the upkeep; while the FACM regularly replace the marble gravestones, the bones are obviously allowed to decompose.

**Figure 4: A typical Latin cross gravestone at the FACM (photo by author)**

As the remains are inaccessible, the gravestone itself becomes the site where the culture of care is directed. While visitors to the FACM brought flowers to lay on the graves, it was the cemetery workers who proved of particular interest in regards to the care of the graves. The FACM workers were responsible for the continued upkeep of the graves. This included far more than simply keeping the grass properly mown. Bouquets of flowers were removed after a few days to prevent the presence of wilted flowers, which would indicate a lack of close attention to the deceased. Additionally, the gravestones were regularly replaced when the lettering became too difficult to read due to weathering (Chmielewski May 4, 2015).

In contrast to these gravestones that could be cared for as individuals, the Wall of the Missing has to be cared for more collectively. The names of 27 individuals were carved onto each of the more than 30 panels that composed the Wall of the Missing. Even when the name of an individual was examined, it was in close proximity to the names immediately above and below the individual. Although the bodies of these individuals commemorated on the Wall of the Missing were absent, something corporeal was retained via the naming on massive stone wall.

## Identity of the Individual at the FACM

From a distance, each grave looks identical. However, upon walking up to a specific gravestone, the individual becomes apparent. Instead of just another cross in the masses, the individuals name, unit, rank, state of enlistment, and date of death is recognized. The gravestone provides a small lens through which one can attempt to gain an understanding of the individual buried there. However, this opportunity is limited in that the only information provided is related to their life in the military; there is no indication of their civilian life. In this, their story remains silent. By examining the life of the individual Staff Sergeant George Keathley, the process

through which an individual went from an American civilian, to a soldier, and from a traumatized body, to a named headstone in an American cemetery in Italy.

George Dennis Keathley was born on November 10, 1907, on the family farm located outside the town of Olney in north central Texas to William F. Keathley and Bertha Mary Leberman Keathley (Woodall 2010). The Keathley children grew up working on the farm, helping to raise cotton, wheat, cattle, and hogs. Keathley attended school in Olney, but dropped out of high school and moved to Oklahoma to live and work for his older brother. He worked at his brother's meat packing plant while finishing high school. Keathley then went to Cameron State School of Agriculture and earned his associate degree in agriculture (Woodall 2010). After, he enrolled in Texas A&M, but had to withdraw in the spring of 1935 due to financial reasons. Keathley obtained a job with the Soil Conservation Service and was assigned to work in the town of Lamesa, Texas (Woodall 2010). Here, he met and married Inez Edmunson on April 12, 1942. Edmunson brought her two daughters into the marriage, making Keathley a stepfather.

Shortly after, Keathley volunteered for the army and entered the service May 15, 1942 at the age of 34 (Woodall 2010). He was shipped to Camp Shelby, Mississippi where he was assigned to the 338$^{th}$ Infantry Regiment, 85$^{th}$ Division. By June 1943, his unit was training in California where he was promoted to corporeal, then sergeant, and eventually staff sergeant. Orders were issued for the division to be sent to New Jersey, and then deployed to Europe in late 1943. By early 1944, Keathley was in Italy, taking part in the Allied invasion.

The Allied forces had invaded Italy, starting in Sicily in July 1943 (Miller 1945). The force was mainly composed of the American 5$^{th}$ Army and the British 8$^{th}$ Army. On September 3, 1943, Italy unconditionally surrendered to the Allies. At this point, the Italians were ordered to instead fight the Germans. An armistice between Italy and the Allies was officially signed on

September 6. The Allies moved northward, capturing towns from German forces. On June 4, 1944, the Allies liberated Rome. From there, they continued north up the peninsula, pushing against the German Gothic Line; their last defense.

Monte Altuzzo was part of the Gothic Line. The Allies focused their attack at Il Giogo Pass, along Highway 6524 (Woodall 2010). In order to be successful, the Allies needed to capture the Monticelli hill mass to the west of the highway and Monte Altuzzo to the east (Woodall 2010). Keathley's unit was part of the attack to take Monte Altuzzo. On the morning of September 14, 1944, Keathley's Company B joined Company A in the newest assault to gain the ridge of Monte Altuzzo (Woodall 2010). By the time the third German counterattack had been repulsed by the American forces, all officers and noncommissioned officers of the 2nd and 3rd Platoons had been wounded or killed (Woodall 2010). Keathley, already in command of the 1st Platoon, volunteered to take command of the 2nd and 3rd. The remaining men in the platoons were low on ammunition. Keathley, while under fire from Germans, crawled to the American casualties, collected their ammunition, and provided medical aid when possible. He then crawled to his men still fighting and gave them the recovered ammunition. The Germans launched the 4th counterattack; the assault was so strong that Company B was given up for lost (Woodall 2010). The Germans troops repeatedly tried to drive a wedge in the American position, but were beaten back each time. A hand grenade exploded near Keathley, inflicting a "mortal wound on his left side," however, he continued to lead his men and fire his rifle for another 15 minutes while holding his "torn body" together with his left hand (Woodall 2010). The Germans faltered, then broke, the American forces were victorious.

Technical Sergeant Charles Dozier, a close friend of Keathley's, was a witness to his death. After the American victory, Keathley sunk to the ground. In his final moments, he asked

Dozier to send his wristwatch, a gift from his wife, home to her. His last words were, “Please write my wife a letter and tell her I love her and I did everything I could for her and my country. So long, Dozier. Give ‘em hell for me. I’m done for,” (Woodall 2010:70). He died September 14, 1944. A month later, on October 16, his wife was notified he was killed in action.

Keathley was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty” (Medal of Honor Recipients). His wife accepted the medal on his behalf. Of the estimated 16.1 million American men and women who served in WWII, only 472 were awarded the Medal of Honor; 273 were awarded posthumously (Medal of Honor Recipients).

Prior to his deployment, Keathley told his wife that if he was killed in action, he wanted to be buried where he fought (Woodall 2010). She followed his wishes and had him buried at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial. Along with Keathley, there are two other Medal of Honor recipients buried at FACM and one recognized on the Wall of the Missing.

In the chapters that follow, Keathley’s story will be drawn upon as an example of continued identity after death at the FACM. He serves as part of the collective military identity of the FACM while simultaneously standing out as an individual due to his achievements in life, some of which are recognized on his gravestone.

# Chapter 3

## History and Context: World War II

Italy was an integral part of World War II, allied initially with Nazi Germany, but then switched sides to become cobelligerents with the Allies. I will begin with a background on the war itself, focusing first upon Nazi Germany and its goals and allies. Moving forward, I will discuss how the United States came to join in the war when its leaders had taken careful measure to avoid joining another global conflict. The focus then turns to the Allied invasion of Italy and the ensuing battles, followed by a discussion of the Italian political struggles taking place contemporaneously. Then, the United States Armed Forces will be examined, including the history and process behind the implementation of the draft and the training of conscripted soldiers. This chapter focuses upon the living and their actions, which includes the movements of those who would die abroad. However, the discussion on the deceased begins in the next chapter.

## Background on World War II

World War II began when Nazi Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Nazi Germany, under the rule of Adolf Hitler, began the war in the name of expanding German race and space; the superior Aryan race needed room to grow. Hitler's ultimate goal included the destruction of democracies. In 1939, Prime Minister Benito Mussolini of Italy knew that his country was not militarily ready to aid Germany in the war. However, Mussolini knew he wanted to be on Germany's side and hence, he declared Italian 'non-belligerence' as opposed to declaring neutrality (Labanca 2015). On June 10, 1940, Mussolini announced that Italy would enter the war with its German ally against liberal democracies (Labanca 2015). The Tripartite Pact, signed September 27, 1940 was a defensive military alliance between Germany, Italy, and Japan (Lee 2015). There was shared ideology between these three countries, including anti-

liberalism, anti-Communism, and foreign policy centered on conquering neighboring countries (Lee 2015).

*The United States Joins the War*

Since the Nazis rose to power in Germany in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, and Secretary of War, Geroge Durn, had been waging a "war against war" (Miller 1945:312). Roosevelt faced opposition, in that citizens of the United States did not want to be involved in another world war. Thus Roosevelt's options to aid the Allies were limited. On September 2, 1940, one year and one day after the German invasion of Poland, President Roosevelt signed a "Destroyers for Bases" agreement. In this agreement, the United States gave Great Britain over 50 obsolete destroyers. In exchange, the United States was granted a 99-year lease to territory in Newfoundland and the Caribbean to be used as United States air and naval bases (Perry 2013).

On December 17, 1940, after Prime Minister Churchill had informed Roosevelt that Britain would be unable to continue paying for military supplies, the Lend-Lease initiative was put into action (Perry 2013). Under the Lend-Lease agreement, the United States would lend supplies to the British, deferring payment until a later date. When payment was eventually made, it would not necessarily be monetary in nature. Roosevelt's primary motivation in the Lend-Lease agreement was to be able to lend aid to the Allied effort in defeating Nazi Germany without entering the war until the American military and public were ready (Perry 2013).

In 1940, the United States began a gradual embargo on the trade of all potentially militarily useful supplies with Japan (Perry 2013). The United States placed a full embargo on Japan in mid-1941 after Japan formed an agreement with Vichy France, enabling Japanese forces to move into Indochina and begin their Southern Advance (Perry 2013). As a result of the

embargo, Japan faced serious shortages and were convinced the United States officials were opposed to negotiations: the Japanese leaders decided the time had come for swift action. The United States did not believe Japan had the military strength to attack the United States or any of its territories.

The United States did not expect the Japanese airborne attack on Pearl Harbor, an American naval base in Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. The following day, Roosevelt addressed Congress, beginning his speech with the famed line, "Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy." In this speech, he asked Congress for a declaration of war against Japan. Within a few hours, Congress had agreed to the declaration of war, which Roosevelt then signed. On December 11th, the United States declared war against Japan's allies, Germany and Italy while these two states declared war against the U.S. (Miller 1945). The United States was now partners with the Allies against the Axis Powers and its satellites.

*The Allied Invasion of Italy*

The primary purpose of the invasion of Italy was to immobilize as many German troops as possible. Additionally, by fighting in Italy, the Allies diverted Nazi Germany's attention away from the invasion of Western Europe (Miller 1945). The invasion was composed of the American 5th Army and the British Army. Starting in Sicily, the Allied troops worked their way north up the peninsula, liberating Rome and pushing against the German Gothic Line (Fig. 5).

**Figure 5: Map displaying the Allied troops movements in Italy from July 1943 to May 1945. Blue is the United States 5th Army, red is the British 8th Army, and green is the German Gustav Line (How Stuff Works).**

## The Invasion of Sicily

The Allied invasion of Italy began on July 9, 1943 with the movement into Sicily by British, American, Canadian, and French troops. In the weeks prior to invasion, the Allies had conquered the smaller islands of Pantelleria, Lampeduse, Linosa, and Lampione, which lay off the southwestern coast of Italy (Miller 1945). The invasion began with the launching of planes from Allied airbases in North Africa, as well as a large fleet of ships. The Allied troops included the British 8th Army under General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery and the American 7th Army commanded by Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. (Miller 1945). The Allies were mainly fighting against German troops and tanks.

The Battle of Sicily ended on August 17, 1943 after the capture of the city of Messina (Perry 2013). The Sicilian campaign represented a triumph for Allied strategy. It was a victory of supply as the Allies were adequately provisioned throughout the campaign. The campaign was also a masterful job of transportation as few ships were lost, and it had outstanding care of the wounded as air ambulances transported 15,000 casualties back to North Africa without a single loss (Miller 1945). Furthermore, the political significance of the victory provided the Allies with the captured Italian soldiers, who, after release, volunteered to join the Allies.

During the invasion of Sicily, the first Allied bombing took place on July 19th. Rome was the center of a vast rail network that Germany was dependent upon for the shipment of both man and materials of war to southern Italy and Sicily (Miller 1945). Pilots were to strategically bomb rail yards and airfields. They were to bomb these points with great precision so as not to destroy any of the ancient monuments of Rome. The bombing was an Allied success; only five planes were lost to German fighters and there was only minor damage to a church that was located on the edge of a railway yard (Miller 1945).

## The Battle of Salerno

The Battle of Salerno, which began September 8, 1943, was the first battle to take place on the Italian mainland (Miller 1945). The battle involved over 700 Allied ships from the American, British, Dutch, French, and Polish navies. Heavily armed Germans replaced the Italian troops in the area in the hours immediately before the Allies landed (Miller 1945). When the first wave of troops hit the shore, American and British battleships and destroyers bombarded the on shore defenses of the Germans (Perry 2013). By the end of the first day, the Allies had managed to establish several disconnected beachheads (Miller 1945). The Germans tried and failed at five attempts to push the Allies off of the beaches. The Allies were able to capture Salerno, but soon lost it. This pattern of gain and loss was repeated several times over the next week.

Nearly a week after the battle began, on the night of September thirteenth, the Germans launched their last and strongest attack (Perry 2013). Small tank units accompanied by armored cars allowed the Germans within a mile of the beach held by the Allies. The Allied navy fired upon the Germans from offshore while the Allied troops proved too resilient and the German forces too shattered to be able to succeed. Meanwhile, the 45$^{th}$ Division was sent inland to relieve the 36$^{th}$ Division, who were between two rivers (Perry 2013). The Germans then launched a trap, but unbeknownst to the Germans, another regiment was sent to flank them. The Germans in Berlin, however, prematurely claimed victory in the Battle of Salerno. Shortly after this point, Salerno was entirely cleared of Germans. The American 5$^{th}$ Army overran the Sorrentine Peninsula and liberated the town of Amalfi and several other towns nearby. The Allies, for the first time in the war had a continuous, unbroken front across the Italian peninsula (Miller 1945).

The Fall of Naples

On September 21, 1943, the Allies began a 40-mile wide assault spread from the tip of the Sorrentine Peninsula to east of Salerno; their ultimate goal in the newest assault to capture Naples (Miller 1945). Their first objective was Avellino, a railway and road junction 25 miles east of Naples. The main obstacle facing the 5th Army was the mountainous terrain with only a narrow valley pass with Germans blocking the way. Meanwhile, German troops were sacking Naples, killing civilians, and forcing Italian soldiers into slave labor (Miller 1945). Due to their continued resistance, Allied warships moved up the coast to lend assistance.

The British 8th Army pushed to overtake Foggia's railway junction and airport. The Germans gave no opposition until the 8th Army was nearly upon Foggia, at which point, the impetus behind the British attack was too much for the small German force to fend off. The Foggia airfields gave the Allies a vast range of domination, spanning to include Italy, the Mediterannean, Africa, southern France and Germany, Austria, and the Balkans (Miller 1945).

On September 28, American and British troops broke through the German line in the mountains and swept down into Naples (Miller 1945). This was accomplished by troops drive up the narrow coastal portion to the west of Mount Vesuvius. On the ocean side, Sorrento and Catellammare de Stabbia, the latter an important naval base, fell to the Americans (Miller 1945). The Allies subsequently captured inland towns. American and British troops overtook Naples as the Germans fled. An upsurge of Naples' citizens revolting sped up the process of German retreat. However, the Germans had destroyed places of no military significance during their exodus, including mining many buildings. The Italian civilians were aware of these booby traps and forewarned the Allies of the presence of these explosives before they could cause damage (Miller 1945). The biggest problem the Allies faced after the capture of Naples was the lack of

supplies; the city had essentially no food, water, medicine, or basic supplies. The Allies had food and medicine sent in and fixed the water supply, damaged by the Germans.

A week after the fall of Naples, the 5th Army attacked the Germans in Capua. The battle followed much the same course as in Naples; the Germans demolished and pillaged as they fled and civilians welcomed their liberators (Miller 1945). The Allied troops had to battle the elements, namely rain, during their march north from Naples. Meanwhile, the Germans used every lull in the weather to strengthen their new line of defense behind the Volturno; the Gustav Line based in Cassino (Miller 1945).

The 5$^{th}$ and 8$^{th}$ Armies were tasked with the capture of several heavily fortified outposts before attacking the Gustav Line directly (Miller 1945). Assisting them was the “ghost army” composed of American, British, Australian, and Indian troops who had been captured and imprisoned in northern Italy, but escaped and found themselves on the German side of the Gustav Line (Perry 2013). Aided by the local Italian peasants and Italian soldiers who deserted the German army, they employed guerilla warfare against the Germans. After the 5$^{th}$ and 8$^{th}$ Armies captured the fortified outposts, they could block access to important highways (Miller 1945).

In the fight against the Gustav Line, the 5$^{th}$ Army had to first get past Mt. Camino and Mt. Maggiore, two contiguous, multiple peaked mountains with almost sheer walls. The Americans gained Mt. Camino, but lost it to a German counterattack (Perry 2013). Meanwhile, the 8$^{th}$ Army threatened the main portion of the Gustav Line. The Germans turned their focus upon the 8$^{th}$ Army, thus, allowing the 5$^{th}$ Army to regain Mt. Camino. Italian cobelligerents joined the Allied forces for the first time at this battle (Miller 1945). The 5$^{th}$ Army struggled to make significant advances, at the cost of heavy loss of life. However, they were able to finally

make it to the town of Cassino, but it would still take months of fighting before the Allies had a firm hold on this crucial town (Miller 1945). The campaign in Italy had thus far given the Allies the harbor of Naples and the airport of Foggia, the latter of which could be used as a base to bomb all of southern Europe (Miller 1945).

## The Battle of Cassino

At the end of November 1943, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and General Chiang Kai-Shek met in Cairo, and then went to Tehran without Kai-Shek to meet with Stalin. On December 24, General Eisenhower, who had been overseeing the invasion of Italy, was informed of the decision these leaders had made; Eisenhower was named Supreme Commander and ordered to return to England to take command of the Allied forces for the invasion of Europe from the Western front (Miller 1945).

The Battle of Cassino began January 17, 1944. The purpose of the attack was to break through the German Winter Line, the Gustav Line, and eventually breakthrough to Rome (Perry 2013). The initial Allied strategy was to simultaneously encircle Cassino and attack it from the front. The main barrier to Cassino was a chain of three mountains with German outposts strategically placed on them (Miller 1945). The French were able to push the Germans off one of the peaks to the north of Cassino. Despite heavy officer losses, the French were able to subsequently push the Germans off more peaks, strengthening their drive to Cassino (Perry 2013).

Meanwhile, American troops faced the natural barrier of the Rapido River. Hundreds of soldiers swam across the river and began to dig trenches. However, when the fog cleared, the Americans were left exposed and barraged with German artillery. Despite high American casualties, the troops kept fighting until there was not a “bullet left” and then swam back across

the river to their own side (Miller 1945). After three days of combat, the Germans demanded a truce to allow the wounded to be recovered. The Americans fighting at Rapido River was the scene of the heaviest fighting since the Battle of Salerno (Miller 1945).

On January 21, American dive-bombers launched an attack on the German Air Force headquarters as the first step of the next assault south of Rome (Miller 1945). The following day marked a solid, long-term blow against the Germans; the landing of fresh American and British troops of the 5th Army within thirty miles of Rome, at the harbors of Anzio and Nettuno (Miller 1945). These new troops faced no German resistance upon landing. It was not until the next day that 100 German fighter-bombers swept over the Allied landing stages. Meanwhile, the new Allied troops pushed inland. It was only after several miles that they met the first real ground resistance. The Germans unleashed a strong counteroffensive along the Cassino front; they needed to prevent the new troops from meeting with the troops already around Cassino (Miller 1945).

The Allies adopted the Russian Red Army tactic in an attempt to break the deadlock at the Cassino front (Miller 1945). Using tanks and infantry as teams, engineers were sent out to lay log roads where the Germans had diverted streams to flood the lowlands around Cassino. The tanks and infantry advanced simultaneously (Perry 2013). The Gustav Line was finally cracked, with the Allies within a mile of Cassino. The Allies continued to push forward, but the Germans were determined not to lose Cassino, the final barrier to Rome (Miller 1945).

On the night of March 14, all Allied forces were secretly withdrawn well out of Cassino. The following morning, Cassino was absolutely bombarded; the first wave of 4,000 planes swept over the city. Cassino was crushed to rubble under the heaviest concentrated aerial bombardment that had yet been inflicted on a single target (Miller 1945). However, it was the battle lasted

another two months; it was not until May 18 that the Allies had thoroughly and definitively smashed Cassino, the last major barrier to Rome (Miller 1945).

## The Liberation of Rome

During the early days of June 1944, part of the 5th Army went straight to Rome from the Alban Hills while another part swung east to flank the natural defenses. The 8th Army went to Frosinone and gained control of Highway 6 (Miller 1945). The Germans knew that maintaining control of Rome was impossible. Nevertheless, the Germans turned all their guns and tanks on the advancing Allies in an attempt to stop a final breakthrough. Although Rome's fall was inevitable, it was still uncertain if the Allies could achieve their other main objective; the complete destruction of the German 10th and 14th Armies (Perry 2013). Although shattered and crippled, there were many routes through which the remainder of these troops could escape to the north (Miller 1945).

In the Allied assault, the 5th Army feinted; the Germans rushed to reinforce one area, only to be attacked in an area left relatively unprotected to the northwest. As this was happening, the British captured Frosinone and were moving up Highway 6. The Germans began to flee. Mount Cavo and Rocca di Papa served as the final barrier to Rome (Miller 1945). On June 3, the Allies smashed through, taking down any Germans still opposing them.

On June 4, 1944, the Allies liberated Rome, just two days prior to the D-Day and the beginning of the liberation of France (Perry 2013). The first units to enter the capital came to protect the city from the ravages of the Germans, who had fled to the northwest. Units of the 5th and 8th Armies soon followed. Physically, Rome was relatively unscathed from its German rule and subsequent nearby battles (Perry 2013). Only a few Allied bombs had been dropped and the retreating Germans had left a few booby traps. However, the Allies were immediately faced with

the issue of supplies, namely food. Rome's population of 1.4 million had increased by 750,000 due to refugees from both the north and south (Miller 1945).

Back in Berlin, the German reason for retreating from Rome was given as "to save it from becoming a battleground;" they were being selfless in their ability to place the importance of the preservation of Rome's millennia of culture over the military need to maintain control of the city (Miller 1945). Rome was divided in half, with the 5th Army designated to clear the area to the west of Germans and the 8th Army to do the same on the east. German resistance was still particularly strong in the northeast, but the 8th Army was able to overcome this resistance (Perry 2013). This continued invasion was of critical importance; the Allies wanted to occupy the Germans so thoroughly in Italy they could not afford to withdraw a single man to be sent to aid against the Allied invasion in France (Miller 1945).

Immediately after Rome's liberation, the 5th and 8th Armies formed a 70 mile long front, from the Tiber River to the Apennine Mountains, and advanced north while accompanied by and aerial armada (Miller 1945). They captured the main port of Rome, located 40 miles north of the city proper. Germans defended the island of Elba, off the western coast of Italy. A fleet of Allied warships captured the island, which proved of great importance as Germany's sea communication in western Italy was now gravely threatened. Meanwhile, the 5th and 8th Armies continued to the Gothic Line in the north.

## Florence, Pisa, and the Gothic Line

The Allies drove the Germans north from Rome to Florence to Pisa to the Gothic Line (Miller 1945). There was heavy German resistance as the Allies drove them towards their last strongholds. The Allies first major objective was the fortified seaport of Leghorn. Possession of this port would leave the railway city of Pisa vulnerable for Allied attack. Southeast of Leghorn

was another 5th Army objective, Siena, which blocked the way to Florence (Miller 1945). On the Adriatic coast, at nearly the same latitude as Leghorn, lay Ancona, a harbor city that was the objective of the 8th Army.

At the beginning of July, the Allies began to gain ground. The Germans were forced to abandon positions and retreat further north. The Allies refused to shell the city of Siena, not wanting to damage it cultural and religious monuments. When the French entered the city, they found it virtually undamaged (Miller 1945). It was in Siena where the Allies made their first real contact with Italian patriot groups that had been helping the Allies behind the northern line. Meanwhile, the 8th Army captured Arezzo, which was both a tactical and strategic victory; the town was key to Germany's defense system and commanded four major highways to the north (Miller 1945). From Arezzo, the 8th Army moved north and crossed the Arno River. American troops reached the Arno July 18, slightly farther west than the British and one day after they had crossed. The Americans struck the south bank at a point between Florence and Pisa, thus threatening both. Simultaneously, part of the 8th Army's easternmost units gained control of the town of Ancona.

A subgroup of the 8th Army near Arezzo faced a hostage situation (Miller 1945). Germans captured 232 Italian civilians, mostly women and children, and carried them off to a monastery on a nearby mountain peak. The Germans pledged to defend their position to the last man and would see to it the civilians died with them (Miller 1945). The British commander suggested the Germans let the civilians go and in return his men would not fire on the monastery. Instead, the British fired on the German troops in the surrounding area. The British ultimately destroyed the monastery, killing the innocent civilian victims.

July 18 was a day of triumph for the Allies; Leghorn fell to the Americans and Ancona fell to the British 8th Army's Polish troops (Miller 1945). However, most of Leghorn's port facilities had been destroyed. Although Ancona suffered from bombings and demolitions, the damage was not as extensive as that at Leghorn.

Pisa and Florence were now the main objectives of the 5th Army (Miller 1945). As they moved nearer, German defense became more aggressive. The Allies sent three columns against Florence; Americans from the southwest and British from the south and southeast (Miller 1945). At this point, Germany was desperate for manpower; therefore, the troops facing the Allies were mostly older men. Four and a half days after Leghorn fell, the Americans surged into Pisa. The Germans were determined to defend the main part of Pisa; they fell back across the Arno without destroying the bridges, which allowed the Americans to capture the southern section of the city. The Germans used the Leaning Tower of Pisa as an observation point to direct the fire of their artillery and tank movements (Miller 1945). The Allies were unwilling to fire at or near the Tower. The difficulty the Allies were facing in capturing Pisa was due in part to the withdrawal of two veteran divisions, the 34th Infantry and the 1st Armored, which were perhaps the most seasoned troops in the entire American army (Miller 1945). These troops were reassigned to fight on the western front. The troops that replaced them were a mixed group of veterans and green soldiers.

The assault of Florence involved the combined effort of Americans, British, New Zealanders, and South Africans (Miller 1945). The Allied purpose was to hold the line firm and then push back the Germans. The Germans knew they could not indefinitely withstand the Allies concentrated drives; therefore, the German objective was to delay the Allies as long as possible, and in the process, inflict the greatest possible loss before falling back to the outskirts of the city,

and ultimately, the Gothic Line. Above all, the Germans could not afford to allow the Allies to break out of Italy into France and join General Eisenhower's invasion army. The first Allied patrol entered Florence on August 4, just two months after the liberation of Rome (Miller 1945). Only one bridge across the Arno River had been spared from German destruction. The Germans showed an utter disregard for preservation of the city, despite earlier promises otherwise. After a week of battle the situation was still indecisive. By tacit common consent, the two sides paused their fighting to rest. The Germans decided to take advantage of the lull in fighting and fled north, only to be followed the by the 8th Army (Miller 1945).

Once Florence was liberated, the Allied Military Government rushed in food (Miller 1945). Several days after liberation, German tanks rolled into the north of Florence. They swept the area with random barrages, killing civilians. The Allies soon pushed the tanks back. After the fall of Florence, the bulk of the 8th Army was transferred across the Apennines to the Adriatic sector (Miller 1945).

West of Florence, British and American troops probed carefully forward towards German fortifications (Miller 1945). In the Adriatic area, the 8th Army continued its advance, feelings its way towards the eastern outposts of the Gothic Line. The Gothic Line was deemed impregnable by German propaganda. The nearer the Allies came to the Line, the greater the German resistance.

The battle for Pisa continued. American troops were slowly making their way into the northern part with 5th Army units advancing on both sides of the city (Miller 1945). Pisa finally fell the same day the British drove their first great wedge into the Gothic Line. The British and their allies broke through the Gothic Line, tearing a hole twenty miles across. The Gothic Line was Germany's last hope in Italy; they had no real defenses behind it. At this point, only a few

points of the 150 mile line had been broken. The firmness with which the Line was held was based on the ease of transit, industrial and agricultural wealth that it protected for German exploitation, German access to the factory cities of Milan, Turin, and Bologna, as well as several naval bases (Miller 1945).

A year after the Battle of Salerno, the Allies were maintaining a constant, almost imperceptible advance to the heart of the Gothic Line (Miller 1945). German resistance grew increasingly desperate. The Gothic Line was really a series of lines; defeating one only meant moving on to the next. It was designed that with every advance by the attacker, there was an increase in resistance in a direct ratio.

The 5th Army launched its major offensive against the Gothic Line (Miller 1945). The initial advances were minimal, but served to throw the Germans off. The 8th Army, increasing its pressure in the entire Adriatic sector, was able to move forward at ever-greater speeds. The 5th Army surged forward north of Florence into the body of the Gothic Line, cutting a gap six miles wide (Miller 1945). They were in position to threaten the fertile Po Valley and to swing northwest to the naval bases in Milan and Turin or to the northeast to Bologna (Miller 1945). A British unit in the 5th Army gained a vantage point in the drive towards one of the few breaks in the natural defenses of the Gothic Line, Futa Pass, one of the major roads to Bologna and Imola. Capture of this pass would mean doom for the entire central section of the Gothic Line; the plains of Lombardy would be open to the Allies (Miller 1945).

*The Italian Political Struggle*

Hitler needed Rome in order to be able to contain British forces in North Africa and to provide occupation forces in the Balkans and Russia (Labanca 2015). In the spring of 1943, Nazi

Germany implemented Operation Aleric to increase the presence of German troops in Italy, ready to take over strategic points (Labanca 2015).

In the midst of the Allied invasion of Sicily on the night of July 24, 1943, Mussolini was voted out of office, arrested, and replaced with a military government led by General Pietro Badoglio (Labanca 2015). Badoglio established the government in southern Italy. King Victor Emmanuel III and Badoglio soon after declared that the war would continue against the Allies. However, immediately after Badoglio assumed power, he began to parley with the American and British. As part of these negotiations, Badoglio ordered the recall of all Italian troops in France and the Balkans to bolster defenses in Italy (Miller 1945). However, the fighting of the Italians against Allied troops would continue for another month.

On September 3, 1943, Badoglio unconditionally surrendered to the Allies, despite previous statements in which he wanted “honorable capitulation” (Miller 1945). At this point, the Italians were ordered to instead fight the Germans. An armistice between Italy and the Allies was officially signed on September 6. Following the signing of the armistice, there was a radio announcement stating 1) the Italian fleet and merchant navy was directed to go to the nearest harbor held by the Allies and 2) directed the people of Italy to give every assistance to the Allied troops and do nothing to help the Germans (Miller 1945). Additionally, Italian aircrafts in the Balkans and Aegean Sea were directed to an Allied base, Italian soldiers were forbidden any acts of hostility against the people of the country where they were stationed, troops able to were instructed to return to Italy without surrendering to Germans, and those in a position to fight were to take possession of the territories for the Allies (Miller 1945).

This sudden change of sides left the Italian military in chaos. The Italian troops and their commanders had no clear instructions on procedure moving forward after the armistice. The

Germans, however, via Operation Aleric, responded; the arms and strategic positions were to be seized, traitors disarmed and arrested, and Italian soldiers who attempted armed resistance were to be shot (Labanca 2015).

During the Battle of Salerno, a German parachute group rescued Mussolini from his imprisonment on September 12, 1943, just four days after the Italians signed the armistice. Mussolini then established the Neo-Fascist Italian Social Republic on September 23, 1943 in northern Italy (Labanca 2015). Once Germany's strongest ally was eliminated, the Italian campaign was no longer of primary importance to the Allies, especially after the fall of Rome in June 1944. In order to break through the German Gothic Line north of Florence, more forces were required than the Allies were willing to devote to Italy (Labanca 2015).

On June 5, 1944, one day after the liberation of Rome, King Victor Emmanuel III signed over his royal powers to his son, Crown Prince Humbert, as Lieutenant General of the Realm. This declaration was a consummation of Emmanuel's promise to give up all power and retain only his title as head of the House of Savoy on the day the Allies liberated Rome (Miller 1945). At this point, Premier Badoglio offered his resignation. However, Prince Humbert ordered him to form a new government. When Badoglio did not follow the order, he was replaced with Ivanoe Bonomi, who had been Mussolini's predecessor as prime minister. Under Bonomi, a new Italian government was formed. For the first time in Italian history, the government took its oath to the country rather than to the king (Miller 1945). On October 25, 1944 the free Government of Italy was recognized by the United Nations; fascism was dead in Rome and southern Italy (Miller 1945).

## The Formation of the United States Armed Forces

The United States in 1940 did not have professional armies like Germany and Japan. In 1940, there were only 174,000 American soldiers, still wearing parts of uniforms issued for World War I and carrying rifles from 1903 (Miller 1945). To compensate for their current military inadequacies, Congress federalized the National Guard and the members of the Minnesota National Guard were called for active duty (Miller 1945). Then, Congress enacted the draft.

At this time the United States was not at war. However, on September 16, 1940, the United States instituted the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, which called for all men between the ages of 18 and 65 to register for the draft, and from those under the age of 45, draft selections were made (Kennett 2014). This was the first peacetime draft in American history. Before the United States went to war, those drafted were to serve at least one year in the armed forces. However, once the United States entered the war, those who were drafted were to serve for the duration of the fighting. Although the United States had not yet officially entered the war, there was a growing fear of the power of Nazi Germany. Despite inclinations to isolationism in which Americans did not want to be drawn into another world war, it was deemed prudent to be prepared for the eventuality that the United States would join the war (Kennett 2014). However, by the summer of 1940 when Germany had conquered France, there was increasing support from the American public for the implementation of conscription. The draft was later extended to require all men 18 to 65 to register for the draft, with those 18 to 45 being immediately liable for induction (Kennett 2014). By war's end in 1945, 50 million men between the ages of 18 and 45 had registered for the draft and over 11 million had been called up (Miller 1945).

Conscription worked via a lottery system. An individual was notified of their conscription by a ‘greetings’ letter that began with “Greetings. The President of the United States and your neighbors have selected you to be drafted into the Armed Forces for to protect the country, etc.” (Kennett 2014).

Within days of being drafted or enlisting, men were sent to basic training. The goal of training was to turn young men who did not know each other into a single, cohesive unit with the loyalty needed to withstand the horrors of battle (Miller 1945). The new recruits were then stripped of their civilian clothes and personal belongings, which were tagged and sent home. The men’s heads were shaved then they were issued sets of shirts, pants, socks, underwear, and a canvas bag, in addition to a bucket with toiletries and a pair of dress shoes (Kennett 2014).

In basic training, everything was under the control of the drill instructor, a veteran sergeant. The drill instructor’s bellowing voice was an integral part of basic training, the sound to wake up to in the morning, the yelling did not cease until evening mess call (Kennett 2014). Any rebelliousness, intentional or unintentional was met with punishment from the drill instructor. Training included learning hand-to-hand combat, mostly judo and knife fighting, as well as learning survival techniques (Kennett 2014). Throughout the course of training, recruits were taught the evils of the enemy by training films. At the conclusion of basic training, the men were sent to two weeks on the rifle range, where they learned to master their weapons (Kennett 2014).

## Conclusion

Italy’s initial alliance with Nazi Germany instigated an invasion by Allied forces. Although this invasion did not occur until halfway through the war, it was detrimental to Germany, who lost their Italian ally and eventually Italy itself. Despite the United States’ initial

resistance to supplying troops to the war, once committed, the United States quickly began the process of training and deploying recruits. These living individuals were all to aware that at any moment they could die, at which point they would become completely dependent upon the military to oversee the arrangements to recover the body and lay it to rest.

# Chapter 4

## Burying the Dead and Postmortem Identity

Although the living fought in the war, the dead have not been forgotten. Today, the United States federal government has an obligation to oversee the proper burial of those who died while serving their country. This obligation, however, was not always in place, but developed during the Civil War when the scale of mass death made it impossible for families to properly care for their dead. Such government intervention resulted in the formation of military cemeteries and memorials to the unidentified or missing. The interment of an individual in a military cemetery, I argue, serves to solidify their identity with the military as a whole, and in relation to an institutional brotherhood. The establishment of military cemeteries symbolizes the military ethos to "leave no man behind," even in death. They also serve to transform the postmortem identities of the dead.

### Burying the Dead

World War II resulted in the military deaths of 21 million to 25.5 million men and women. When the civilian populations are included in the casualties, the number of dead increases to about 50 million (Perry 2013). Of the 16.1 million Americans who served in the war, 407,000 died throughout the course of the war, two thirds in the European Theater (Wood and Stanley 1989). 93,233 American war dead from WWII are interred in one of the 25 American burial grounds located across Europe (ABMC Web). The final place of interment of WWII remains was carried out under the provision of Public Law 368 of the 80$^{th}$ Congress (ABMC Web). The law allowed next of kin to select the final resting place of a family member's remains either on foreign soil in an American military cemetery, or to repatriate the remains to the United States to be buried in a national or private cemetery (ABMC Web).

*History of Military Cemeteries*

There is an obligation for the federal government to care for the war dead. However, this obligation was not always in place. In the wars the United States fought during the 18th and 19th centuries, it was the responsibility of the family members of the dead to see that the remains were returned home and properly buried (Faust 2008). Prior to the Civil War, there were no national cemeteries, no means to identify the dead or for notifying the next of kin, no federal aid relief programs, no effective ambulance corps, no adequate federal hospitals, no federal provisions for burying the dead, no Arlington Cemetery or Memorial Day. The Civil War would change all of this.

The United States Civil War, 1861-1865, changed the obligation from that of the family to that of the federal government. The sheer magnitude of death in the Civil War was unprecedented. Approximately 750,000 men, 2.5% of the population, died; it was the greatest toll of any war in American history (Faust 2008). There was so much death and so many bodies to deal with, yet, there were no institutions in place to deal with the volume of dead.

It was not until after the massive casualties of the Battle of Gettysburg, in which over 30,000 men died that legislation was passed allowing the federal government the power to purchase the land near battlefields to be used as cemeteries. In October 1863, the Soldiers National Cemetery in Gettysburg was established to rebury Union soldiers in a single cemetery. The establishment of this national cemetery marked the shift in government policy towards the dead. The dead were no longer the responsibility of the family. Rather, the bodies and their meaning belonged to the nation (Faust 2008).

By the end of the war in 1865, there was still no official system to locate, identify, rebury, and honor the dead. In spring 1865, around the time of the end of the war, Clara Barton, a

battlefield nurse, established the Missing Soldiers Office in Washington, D.C. (Faust 2008). The office gathered and published lists of missing, urging those who knew the fate of these missing to come forward. In October 1865, Barton called for government action in accounting of the dead. In the fall of 1865, Quartermaster General Montgomery Megs issued orders to his officers to provide a survey of all the graves and battle cemeteries including Union soldiers and judge whether the dead should stay or should be exhumed and reburied (Faust 2008).

In February 1867, Congress passed legislation to establish and protect a system of military cemeteries. This National Reburial Program was potentially the largest government undertaking at this point in time. The reburial program ended in 1871, having buried over 300,000 Union soldiers in 74 national cemeteries (Faust 2008). And yet, 140,000 Union soldiers' remains were never identified. These men lay in graves as unknown soldiers. The Confederate soldiers, much to the dismay, and outrage, of Southerners, were never part of the United States government's reburial process.

*Recovery and Identification of World War II Dead*

There were two organizations responsible for the recovery and identification of World War II dead in Europe. The first was the Graves Registration Service (GRS), 1942-1945, which worked during the course of the war. Second was the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC) 1945-1951, which served after the war to identify remains in France, Belgium, Holland, and England (Wood and Stanley 1989). Although AGRC was not responsible for the recovery and identification of remains in Italy, as it was part of the Mediterranean Zone, the process was essentially the same and will serve to provide a basic understanding of the recovery procedure. These American Army organizations were responsible for the locating, identifying, and interring

the remains of American military personnel who fell throughout the course of WWII (Wood and Stanley 1989).

As previously discussed, with each war the United States fought in, the government became more involved in the identification and interment of American military dead. During World War I, the War Department directed the military to keep mortuary records and use registered headboards to mark soldiers' graves (Wood and Stanley 1989). After the dead were returned to the United States, only 3.5% of the 79,000 corpses were unidentified. In 1917, the Graves Registration Service in the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps was established (Wood and Stanley 1989). Their purpose was to identify bodies, mark battlefield graves, keep accurate mortuary records, and maintain temporary burials and semi-permanent military cemeteries in Europe.

The success of the WWI GRS program led to the establishment of GRS for WWII following the attacks on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 (Wood and Stanley 1989). The WWII GRS was tasked to coordinate collection, identification, and burial of the war dead. Based upon WWI experiences, there were some changes with the WWII GRS (Wood and Stanley 1989). The dead were not buried in battle site cemeteries. Instead, the remains were evacuated first to the battalion and then to division collecting points by teams detailed from combat units. At the collecting point, there was first an attempt to identify the dead by consulting members of their own units. After identification, the bodies were transferred to one of the temporary interment sites in Europe. Changes in the procedure from WWI produced a reduction in the percentage of unknown bodies delivered to cemeteries and concentrated the burials to only a few cemeteries (Wood and Stanley 1989).

The American Graves Registration Commission took over for GRS after the war (Wood and Stanley 1367). The main difference in the two was there were no longer active battlefields from which bodies were recovered. AGRC concentrated on search and recovery of remains, specifically, the recovery of isolated and unrecorded burials and unburied remains. In late 1945, AGRC was assigned the responsibility of post-war Casualty Clearance Plan, which was to confirm or alter casualty status (e.g. presumed dead, missing in action, missing, prisoner of war, captured) (Wood and Stanley 1989). Casualty Clearance was given high priority for the sake of the families of missing soldiers. AGRC made searches for graves of all individuals believed to be dead.

The search and recovery missions were a series of area sweeps divided into three phases (Wood and Stanley 1367). First was the data-gathering phase, in which a three-man propaganda team visited communities in an area and distributed posters describing their mission and urged locals to come forward with information on burial places of American dead. Second was the investigation phase where special teams followed leads concerning the whereabouts of potential graves sites of American soldiers. All documented cases were researched until the graves in question were either located or it was determined the site could not be found. Third was the disinterment phase. A team composed of an investigator, driver, and several local laborers used the gathered information to visit the gravesite and exhume remains, and then moved them to mobile collecting points. AGRC's fieldwork ended in 1949, by which point 16,584 isolated remains had been recovered (Wood and Stanley 1989).

The true success of AGRC was measured by its rate of identification of American war dead. In the early months of AGRC, identification methods included the presence of one or more of the following: identification tag (dog tag) found around the neck, dog tag found elsewhere on

or near the person, a paybook found in the clothing, Emergency Medical Tag fastened to the body, or an identification bracelet (Wood and Stanley 1989). These identification methods were not always available as German soldiers would regularly strip Allied soldiers of personal effects. The exhumed bodies were moved to mobile collecting points, where the AGRC attempted to identify previously unknown remains. There was a direct correlation between the amount of time lag between death and recovery and the ability to identify remains (Wood and Stanley 1989).

The Central Identification Point (CIP) was established in the summer of 1946 and based in military barracks in Strasbourg, France (Wood and Stanley 1989). Starting in August 1946, all remains, known and unknown, personal effects and other identifying media, were sent directly to CIP for examination. CIP used physical anthropology techniques to collect the data necessary to assist in the identification process. The data included skeletal reconstruction and estimation of race, age, and stature, dental charting, and fingerprinting (Wood and Stanley 1989).

The process of recovery, identification, and repatriation could be a long one. For example, a crewman of an American B-17 heavy bomber was shot down near Frankfurt Germany and buried in the nearby cemetery on October 14, 1943 (Wood and Stanley 1989). On January 6, 1946, AGRC received a tip on the location of where the man was buried. The grave was disinterred the next day. Then began the long process towards positive identification. After identified, the information was sent to Headquarters of the European Theater of AGRC in Washington, D.C. on December 14, 1948 (Wood and Stanley 1989). On February 8, 1949, the family of the deceased was notified; they decided to have their soldier returned to the United States. The individual was buried in mid July 1949 (Wood and Stanley 1989). From his death until his final resting place took nearly six years. This process is representative of the over

300,000 American soldier remains that were eventually returned home based on the work of both GRS and AGRC.

*The Florence American Cemetery and Memorial*

The United States Congress established the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) in 1923. The ABMC's purpose has four parts: 1) to commemorate the services of the United States armed forces, 2) establish permanent war memorials and military cemeteries in foreign countries, 3) control these military monuments by United States citizens and organizations, and 4) to encourage the continued care of these establishments via sponsors (ABMC Web). Since its inception, ABMC is now responsible for the monuments, memorials, and cemeteries for World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Mexican-American War. With the establishment of ABMC, the United States federal government now had a systematic manner in which to deal with those who died in service.

The Florence American Cemetery and Memorial is one of 25 American military cemeteries located across Europe. Established on July 4, 1960, the interred and memorialized in the cemetery were members of the American military who died in the Tuscan region after the capture of Rome on June 4, 1944. By the end of the war, there were about 20 different temporary cemeteries throughout this region. The soldiers were then brought from the temporary cemeteries to the site that would become the FACM. At this point, the United States government asked families to decide what they wanted done with the remains of their loved ones. 61% chose for them to be returned to the United States, 39% chose to have the deceased buried abroad. 4,402 American soldiers are buried on the Italian hillside located outside of Florence (ABMC Web).

Most are buried under a Latin cross, however, 76 are buried under a Star of David.[5] At the top of the hill is a memorial. The memorial includes a description and corresponding maps of the troop movements in Italy, a small chapel, and the Wall of the Missing, which commemorates the 1,409 missing in action or lost/buried at sea.

The Florence American Cemetery and Memorial is the resting place of over 4,000 American men and women who died in Italy during the final year of World War II. As such, their bodies have come to represent the permanence of military identity and an association with World War II. The archetypal soldier is an image of youth, strength, and masculinity, but also "imagines the soldier's body as a site of endurance, suffering and sacrifice," (Renshaw 2013:771). Their youth is, perhaps, the most telling part of their military identity; the average age at enlistment was 25, their nearly entire adult life thus compressed into their military life and service (Kennett 2014). To speak of one is to speak of the other. With this in mind, these men's military identity is firmly entrenched, for it was an all-encompassing part of their transition to adulthood. Leaving behind home and family to support their country, they lost their lives while serving abroad. The FACM has come to glorify this sacrifice, demonstrating how their identity has become perpetually entangled with that of the American military.

## Where are Military Bodies Buried?

In establishing permanent military cemeteries within another country, a new and complex relationship is created between the two societies (Renshaw 2013). It required the diplomatic ability to forge an agreement that would last far longer than any of the politicians who formed these pacts. Furthermore, it showed trust in the other country far greater than any treaty. It

[5] A cross or Star of David were the only options to be buried under. There are some men who practiced a different religion than Christianity or Judaism buried at FACM. However, in keeping with ABMC standards, the deceased could only be buried under a cross or star.

demonstrated trust that the remains of these "foreigner bodies" could rest in perpetuity, regardless of any conflict that may arise in the future. Establishing cemeteries in previously enemy states also served as a reminder of the past conflict, acting as a silent but salient warning to not repeat the past.

By creating American World War II military cemeteries in Europe close to where the soldiers died, a broader memorial landscape, "which generates new memorial practices and forms of pilgrimage" is established (Lloyd 1998 in Renshaw 2013:769). These cemeteries draw in Americans visiting Europe, giving them a place to pay their respects. New memorial practices are established at these cemeteries to accommodate both the great variety of visitors and the general changes to the cemetery that have taken place over the years.[6]

These military cemeteries form a "lasting physical testimony that meant the scale of the American sacrifice could not be forgotten," (Renshaw 2013:768). They create an intense visual impact upon entering the site. At the FACM, one sees thousands of white crosses on an Italian hillside, representing the scale of death (Fig. 6). The impact is even more staggering upon the realization that there are 24 other military cemeteries like this in Europe. Moreover, these European cemeteries only represent a fraction of the American soldiers buried both in Europe and in the States. Added to this "deathscape" is the Wall of the Missing at the FACM, a reminder of all the remains never recovered and individually identified. The FACM's Wall lists 1,409 missing in action or buried at sea (ABMC Web). Once again, this is only a fraction of the total MIAs from World War II.

[6] Visitors to the FACM include from World War II veterans, family members of deceased buried at the FACM, Italian boy scouts, and European and American tourists visiting Florence who heard of the cemetery from a local Italian.

**Figure 6: The view of the FACM from near the entrance. Note the pathway in the upper right, which leads up the hill to the memorial (photo by author)**

For the families that decided to have the bodies of their soldier's repatriated, the dead became dispersed into new landscapes and associations (Renshaw 2013). The body would have been buried at one of two places: 1) in the cemetery near where his next of kin lived; or 2) in a national military cemetery. Both of these places alter the postmortem identities of the dead. If the individual is buried in a public or private cemetery, his sacrifice is less obvious, obscured by the diversity and irregularity of the gravestones. Even if the individual were buried under a military marker, the impact of the collective sacrifice of soldiers in World War II would be lessened. After all, what is one man who died during a war? The sense of the massive toll of life from war is lost. In contrast, if an individual is buried in a national military cemetery, his death in World War II becomes a part of the overarching image of the collective sacrifice of life in war; it would not highlight the specific war. At the same time, the specific war would not be emphasized, and

the deaths of World War II would be overshadowed by the deaths of *all* soldiers in wars. Thus with a national military cemetery, the image of the American military is at the forefront, rather than that of a specific war. For some soldiers and next of kin, to be buried in a national military cemetery may be preferable. Doing so, allows them to become part of a wider collective of those serving in war of past, present, and future.

**Military Fictive Kin**

"The sheer fact of residence…in a group can and does determine kinship. People do not necessarily reside where they do because they are kinsmen; rather they become kinsmen because they reside there," (Langness 1964:174 in Rodseth 2004:408). The concept of kin as a result of living together can be seen most vividly amongst military men; they are spending months living together and have limited contact with others outside the military. Although the "there" that Langness referred to would constantly be changing for military men on the move, the people they resided with would stay relatively consistent for a period of time.[7] The ties of fictive kinship, a new brotherhood, would be established in life that for some continued on after death.

In death, at the FACM, the "brothers" buried there are fictive kin, as well, based upon their proximity. Although an individual buried at the FACM may not have personally known any of the other soldiers, they all share the bond of having fought and died in Italy, then laid to rest on the same Italian hillside. The most profound form of fictive kinship due to shared residence at the FACM are the multiple burials of unidentified men (Fig. 7). There is one grave consisting of three men and two other graves with two men each (ABMC Web). The remains of these men were commingled when they were recovered. They were deemed too mixed to be able to

[7] Obviously deaths and serious injuries within a unit occurred, causing new replacements to be brought in. However, fictive kinship would form between whoever was part of the unit for any length of time. There was also the wider umbrella of the American soldier and citizen that all could claim wider relations within.

accurately separate. As these remains were unable to be identified, it was determined they would be buried in a grave together at the FACM. These multiple burials illustrate the most intimate form of relations-to be buried together, but no one knows who either of them are.

**Figure 7: A gravestone of two unknown soldiers buried together. The inscription reads "HERE LIES IN HONORED GLORY TWO COMRADES IN ARMS KNOWN BUT TO GOD" (photo by author)**

Their burial at the FACM illustrates the elasticity of kinship ties; the blood family made the decision to have their soldier buried in the military cemetery amongst their “brothers.” However, with unidentified remains, the decision as to where the remains of unknown soldiers, both commingled and individuals, fell to someone else; a government official. It was not a family member who decided where these unknown remains should be buried, for no one knew who the family was of this unknown person. Instead, someone who did not, and could not, know

anything about this individual was given the power to decide if the remains should be repatriated to a military cemetery in the United States or buried amongst his military brothers in Italy.

Military cemeteries play a part in the West's nationalist ideology, which describes the nation as a family (Verdery 1999 in Rodseth). The sons of the nation, particularly soldiers, are part of this rhetoric. These young men, both living and dead, are inserted into a genealogy that contains "…national heroes [that] occupy the place of clan elders in defining the nation as a noble lineage," (Verdery 1999: 41 in Rodseth). These soldiers are given a special resting place, honoring their sacrifice. In creating military cemeteries abroad, it sends the message to those within the United States are willing to make sacrifices in order to protect their values and beliefs. Furthermore, military cemeteries abroad, such as the FACM, honor those killed on "foreign soil" by only allowing those who died during the war to be buried at the site.[8]

**Military Ethos**

To leave no man behind is one of the most basic ethos of the military. It expresses mutual care and dependence between the living, the injured, and the dead soldiers, without creating a distinction between them (Renshaw 2013). Furthermore, it fosters "trust between soldiers facing danger together," (Renshaw 2013:769). A soldier is able to go into battle with the knowledge that, no matter what happens to him, he will not be left behind; if injured they will provide medical aid, if killed his body will be properly laid to rest and his family will be notified. Leaving no man behind is an important part of the American military's ethos; a soldier may die at peace, knowing his body will be taken care of.

[8] There are some buried at FACM who died after World War II officially ended. These soldiers died either as a result of wounds sustained before the war's end or from pockets of fighting that continued after the war's official end. Deaths up until October 1945 were eligible to be included in FACM.

Thus, it is the duty of the living to ensure the care of the bodies of the dead. As previously discussed, the American Graves Registration Commission (AGRC) was responsible for the recovery of military remains after World War II ended, especially isolated and unrecorded burials (Wood and Stanley 1989). The creation of this program demonstrated the American commitment to the recovery of as many soldiers as possible, even if was not until years later that the body was found and given a proper burial. This ethos illustrates the level of trust soldiers place upon one each other; one way or another, the military and federal government will see to it that as many soldiers' bodies as possible will be properly laid to rest, regardless of the time and money it may take to ensure this occurs (Renshaw 2013).

The investment of extensive resources to recover and care for the dead is part of the pact that is formed between the soldier, the state, and civilian society in regards to the acceptable terms of military service and sacrifice (Renshaw 2013). These men made a commitment to their country; it is the duty of the country, the government argues, to see these sacrifices properly honored, regardless of financial costs. Furthermore, when the family of the deceased was given the choice to have their loved one buried in one of the military cemeteries abroad or returned to the states after World War II, the financial cost to do either was not placed upon the family (Chmielewski May 20, 2015). Rather, the next of kin were free to choose whichever burial location fit the desires of the family and the deceased. For example, before Staff Sergeant George Keathley was deployed, he told his wife that if he were killed abroad, he would like to be buried where he died (Woodall 2010). Due to the creation of official World War II American military cemeteries across Europe, Keathley was not buried on the battlefield. Instead, he was buried at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial, about 30 miles from where he died. The FACM is a symbol of the pact made between the soldier, the state, and society. The national

narrative of such places involves something like this: the soldier died for his country, the state oversaw the establishment and continued maintenance of the FACM, and civilians visit to pay their respects, even decades after the soldier's death.

**Who Are You When You Die in Combat?**

To die in a war raises the question of whether the individual "reverts to their civilian identity" as a parent, child, or spouse, or if their identity is solidified by their death in combat (Renshaw 2013:775). If the body is returned to the United States to be buried near the living family, the individual reverts, to a degree, back to their civilian identity. It is the family that knew the deceased during their civilian life that is visiting the grave. Even if the individual is buried under a military gravestone in a civilian cemetery, the family recognizes and mourns the death of their sons/husbands/brothers/father; visitors to the cemetery are not there to pay respects to the sacrifices of the men and women of World War II. The family could decide what text should be written on the gravestone, including information such as living kin and his relationship to them, as well as date of birth. This information is excluded from the gravestones at a military cemetery like the FACM.

In contrast, when the individual is buried at a military cemetery abroad, he retains an identity associated with his life and death in the military. By burying an individual in a military cemetery, his identity becomes more immediately connected to both the military and the region where he died. His service and sacrifice becomes one of his most enduring symbolic properties at the gravesite. Even the gravestones at the FACM illustrate the importance placed upon the deceased's service. Gravestones at the FACM have the first and last name of the deceased, their rank and division at the time of their death, state they enlisted from, and the date of their death.

There is no next of kin, no date of birth, and no hometown, just the information relative to the individual's time in the military.

Of the 4,402 burials at the FACM, 4,322 have Latin Crosses, the other 76 have Stars of David (Fig. 8). Christianity and Judaism were the only two religions recognized by the FACM at the time of its establishment. This is not to say that all soldiers were either Christian or Jewish, but rather, these were the only religions deemed as common enough to warrant specific types of gravestones. At least one Muslim and one Buddhist is buried at the FACM, but they are buried under crosses (Chmielewski May 14, 2015). The American Christian identity is further solidified by the graves of the unknown soldiers. There are over 200 graves of unknown soldiers at the FACM. Every single one is buried under a cross.[9] The epitaph upon each grave of an unknown soldier states "HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY A COMRADE IN ARMS KNOWN BUT TO GOD" (Fig. 9). Not only is the individual's religion assumed to be Christian, his belief in the Christian God is assumed, as well. The graves of unknown soldiers have come to represent a silent rebuke to the American military for their inability to identify the remains (Laqueur 2015).

[9] A Jewish man, whose brother's body was never recovered during World War II, visited a military cemetery in the Philippines where all of the unknown soldiers are buried under Latin Crosses. The man is now fighting for a proportion of graves of unknowns to have the crosses in military cemeteries changed to Stars of David to represent the Jewish unknown soldiers (Chmielewski May 14, 2015).

**Figure 8: One of the 76 Jewish graves at the FACM (photo by author)**

**Figure 9: One of the gravestones of an unknown soldier (photo by author)**

## Conclusions

To be buried at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial is to be memorialized and identified as a soldier. However, before one was buried at the FACM, the family had to make the decision of whether to have their loved one's body returned home and removed from the military context or buried with his new family, where he would be associated with this new brotherhood. In deciding to have the deceased buried at the FACM, the bonds of fictive kinship, which began in life between soldiers, is eternalized by the shared residence in a military cemetery on an Italian hillside. A soldier could die in peace on the battlefield, it was argued, knowing that the American federal government, the military, and civilians had made a pact to

ensure the recovery and proper burial of his body. Burial within the FACM illustrates a commitment to be a part of the military in perpetuity, helping demonstrate the massive toll of war and the sacrifiece required to preserve the imagined community of the nation state (Anderson 1991).

# Chapter 5

## Caring and Mourning at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial Today

Places, such as cemeteries, serve as symbols of the past, acting as a reminder to society of previous historical events (Miller and Rivera 2006). The cemetery, in turn, draws in the people who wish to remember and recognize historical events and the people associated with them. Such is the case at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial. Despite the over 70 years that have passed since the end of World War II, thousands of people every year make the journey to this place; some travel to pay their respects, others as history or architectural buffs, and still others as part of tour groups. The FACM is multivocal in its message, but in some respect attempts to serve as a physical reminder of the sacrifices made to protect Europe from Nazism. "The past is at its best when it takes us to places that counsel and instruct, that show us who we are by showing us where we have been, that remind us of our connections to what happened here," (Chapman in Basso 1996:4). The magnitude of death expressed via the thousands of gravestones and names on the Wall of the Missing is a silent, but compelling admonition against allowing political issues to escalate to war (Winter 2011).

Some 4,402 families chose to have their soldier buried at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial. In doing so, the next of kin placed their trust in the American government and military to ensure that their loved one was properly memorialized. Such a choice to bury abroad, furthermore, limited the family greatly limits their own ability, and that of other Americans, to visit and care for the grave. To some next of kin, visiting their loved one's grave permits a continuation of their relationship (Francis et al 2005). The family relinquished this opportunity for regular material contact when they agreed to have their soldier buried at the FACM.

Yet familial relations can be extended from close kin and distant relations to include complete strangers (Rodseth 2004). At the FACM, the people who care for the deceased have no blood tie to them. Instead, the FACM has posthumously adopted the dead in the form of a gravesite, providing care for them when the blood relations cannot. This adopted family takes on the role of caretakers and mourners, ensuring the graves are well cared for and the deceased properly remembered. Burial at the FACM and the presence of such adoptive families means that the dead continue to be commemorated long after the biological kin of the soldier have themselves passed away. In this manner, new generations of adoptive families are always available to pick up the mantle, and pass on the community of care. Unlike a civilian cemetery, where the grave may be allowed to deteriorate if uncared for, the graves at the FACM have someone to care for them in perpetuity.

**Composition and Roles of the Adopted Family**

In a civilian cemetery, it is the family's reponsibility to visit the grave regularly and ensure it is being properly cared for (Francis et al 2005). Conversely, in a military cemetery far from home, such as the FACM, the family must rely on those who do have access to the cemetery to care for their loved one's grave. The people who visit and maintain the FACM fall into three categories: 1) cemetery workers whose job is the maintenance of the cemetery, both the physical landscape and the archival records; 2) local Italians who adopt a soldier and see it as their duty to care for them and the grave; or 3) tourists, some of whom feel an obligation to visit and pay their respects.[10] Some of these groups of people have become, in a sense, the extended

[10] I use the term "tourist" to describe the third category of visitors, not to imply that the FACM is a tourist attraction, but rather, who these individuals are in more general terms. They are foreigners vacationing in Italy as tourists.

adopted family for the deceased, providing the daily interaction and care that the next of kin is unable due to physical distance.

The Florence American Cemetery is part of the American Battle Monuments Commission, which is based in Virginia. The superintendent, assistant superintendent, and assistant oversee the day-to-day operations of the FACM. The assistant superintendent stressed in our discussion that the most important aspect of his job was to ensure the continued remembrance of the fallen and their stories; to ensure their stories were not forgotten with the passage of time (Chmielewski January 30, 2015). Although 70 years have passed since these men died, the office administration's work is ongoing, searching for and gathering as much information as possible on each of the person's buried there. This includes researching the lives of the soldier before the war, including familial relations, their activities during the war, such as accomplishments and movements, and their deaths. Caring for the dead is part of a near universal and longstanding commitment to the dead and their memory (Laqueur 2015). The workers at the FACM are tasked with upholding the commitment.

A crew of groundskeepers is in charge of the maintenance of the land, graves, and memorials at the FACM. The grass is always mown, the gravestones kept clean, and flowers brought by visitors removed before they wilt too much. Keeping the cemetery neat expresses respect for the departed (Francis et al 2005). Part of the mystique of cemeteries is that even as the world changes around them, they continue to be carefully maintained, serving as "an index for unchanging military ideals and commitment to the dead," (Renshaw 2013:768).

This sense of static time can be seen in the care of the headstones. The white marble markers are replaced regularly because, "although marble may appear hard and enduring, in fact its permanence depends upon constant human attention…the stone should remain whole, clean,

and white, resisting signs of weathering and decay…serves as a metaphor for the upkeep of the name and memory of the deceased," (Francis et al 2005:113). Allowing the gravestone to deteriorate is a sign of allowing the deceased to be forgotten, or at least their memory degraded, which the administrative workers at the FACM actively strive to avoid.

Local Italian families will also participate in activities of care at the site. Some will 'adopt a grave' to care for, honring a specific fallen soldier. The superintendent noted that these people did not want any special attention when they visited the grave, but that they simply wanted to be left alone to honor the dead (Chmielewski May 12, 2015). Yet, these local Italians feel a responsibility to care for the deceased. With the knowledge that the family of the deceased is unable to visit regularly, if ever, local Italians have taken it upon themselves to commemorate the dead. They did not know them in life, of course, and their interaction is limited to simply visiting, saying a few words or having quiet thoughts, and then laying a bouquet of flowers.

Tourists, most of whom were Americans staying in Florence, visit the cemetery by tour bus or in small groups. Most of the American tourists were recently retired couples, staying in Florence for an extended period of time, which allowed them to take a day to visit the FACM (Chmielewski May 4, 2015). Some knew of the FACM before their arrival in Italy and had planned ahead of time to visit. Others only heard of the FACM after they came to Florence, at which point some felt duty bound to pay their respects. When I asked a middle-aged American woman the reason for her visit to the FACM, she simply stated, "because we're Americans," (Chmielewski May 12, 2015). This sense of obligation was a common theme among tourists when asked why they visited the site.

These tourists might be seen as substitutes for the family of the deceased, making the journey that their biological family may or may not have been able to make. However, unlike a

family member, these tourists did not visit the FACM to visit a specific grave. Rather, their visit was made to see the cemetery as a whole and to pay their respects to the collective (Lloyd 1998). Although many would stop and look at graves, they did not know the story of the individual buried there. They were only aware of the historical narrative, involving Americans serving in the military who died while fighting in Italy during the latter half of World War II (Lloyd 1998).

There is a link between war and tourism known as “thanatourism” which concerns a “desire to experience sites associated with death,” (Winter 2011:463). Although thanatourism includes five different types, the visitors to the FACM fall into the group who visit sites or memorials of the dead (Winter 2011). By visiting an American cemetery located in Italy, these tourists take part in a ritual performance of behavior, which helps to perpetuate the social memory of the war (Winter 2011). The tourists visit the FACM, keeping the memory of the war alive, passing the memory on to the generations though without first hand knowledge of World War II.

Flowers, either singular or a bouquet were a common offering placed at the base of the grave of the deceased (Fig. 10). While some were placed by cemetery workers in the name of surviving kin of the deceased, or by a local Italian who had adopted a grave, tourists also brought flowers. An Italian woman brought two large bouquets of flowers to the FACM and left them on one of the benches next to the pathway, rather than placing them at graves (Chmielewski May 4, 2015). When asked why she left the bouquets on the bench, she said she brought them so that other visitors who had not brought flowers could take them and place them on a grave, if they felt so inclined. Placing flowers upon a grave is a way in which visitors can demonstrate their appreciation and any other emotions they feel towards the deceased in a quiet manner (Francis et al 2005).

**Figure 10: A bouquet of flowers placed before a gravestone by visitors. FACM workers placed flags at each grave in preparation for the Memorial Day ceremony (photo by author)**

Other gifts of respect were left at the graves as well. There is a Jewish custom of leaving a small stone on the grave of a Jew in honor of the deceased. This demonstrates that the grave had been visited and someone cared enough to leave a token behind (Francis et al 2005). A stone is used for the permanence it represents, like the memory of the dead. This object stands in contrast to the ephemeral flower, which deteriorate quickly. Although stones were not found in the grass amongst the graves, Jewish vistors either found stones elsewhere at the cemetery or brought them with them. On my multiple visits to the FACM, I observed stones placed upon some of the graves marked with a Star of David (Figs. 11 and 12). The stones would be placed on a cluster of Jewish graves within a section of the cemetery; Jewish visitors did not attempt to

place a stone on every Star of David. Instead, they placed the stones that they had available to indicate a fellow Jew or someone familiar with Jewish customs had visited the graves.

**Figure 11: A pebble placed upon a Jewish grave by an FACM visitor (photo by author)**

**Figure 12: Close up image of the pebble placed on a Jewish grave (photo by author)**

As we can see from the illustrations above, memorialization and care for the dead is provided by an array of caretakers. The family had to place their trust upon those who did have access to the FACM to see to it that the dead were properly mourned and cared for. The workers at the FACM show a deep level of care for the deceased, ensuring the lives of the soldiers are remembered and maintaining a well-kept cemetery out of respect for the continued mourning of the dead. The local Italians who visit the FACM regularly indicate that it is not just Americans who mourn the dead at the FACM. Lastly are the tourists who feel an obligation to visit the final resting place of the soldiers that gave up their lives to protect their country. Although the biological kin relinquished their ability to regularly visit the grave of the deceased, cemeteries

such as the FACM ensure their loved one will be cared for and mourned, long after their own death.

# Chapter 6

## Conclusion

The biological, military, and adopted forms of kinship of the deceased at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial represent the familial transitions of the soldiers, from their home in the United States, to being a member of the American military, and finally buried alongside their military brothers. The soldiers maintained these different forms of kinship simultaneously, even in death. The form of kinship that would take prominence, however, shifted across their life, and death, course.

My study of the FACM demonstrates such fluctuating identities, especially when approached from multiple scales ranging from the collective level to that of the individual. In moving between these scales, a more holistic view of the place and its history is achieved. The collective identity at the FACM is most prominently displayed by the gravestones, their homogeneity, with no special treatment in regards to rank or position in life; such materiality demonstrates the idea that all are equal in death. At the level of the individual, Staff Sergeant George Keathley's life and death serves as a primary example of an single person's story, detailing how someone from a small town in Texas could end up buried in a military cemetery in Italy.

Burial at the FACM signifies a collective association with others through their role as a soldier. Such an association, moreover, is extended in perpetuity by burying the body in such a place. Prior to this association, the next of the kin had to decide whether the remains should be returned to the United States and removed from the military context or buried with his new "brothers," where he would be memorialized as a part of a military family. In choosing to bury the deceased at the FACM, the bonds of fictive kinship amongst the soldiers, which had first

begun at the time of enlistment, is preserved through shared residence in a military cemetery. Burial at the FACM demonstrates a commitment to the military longer than life itself. It also serves to demonstrate and communicate to future generations the massive toll of life from war, and the sacrifice required to preserve the nation-state.

The decision by the next of kin to have their loved one buried at the FACM meant that they would relinquish their ability to regularly visit the grave. Instead, the family had to place their trust in those who did have regular access to the FACM to ensure the dead are mourned and their grave cared for. The workers at the FACM demonstrate a great depth of care for the deceased, constantly working to make sure the lives of the soldiers are remembered and their graves well-kept. The local Italians who have taken it upon themselves to adopt a grave demonstrate that is not just Americans who mourn the dead at the FACM. In addition, some of the tourists who visited the FACM, especially the Americans, said they were obliged to visit the final resting place of the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for their country.

Over 70 years have passed since these soldiers died. Many of those who knew these men in life have since died themselves. Additionally, much of the population that was alive during World War II has passed away. The care and mourning of the deceased at the FACM falls upon the younger generations, those who did not experience World War II firsthand. The FACM serves as a physical reminder of the loss of life in the early 1940s. This cemetery, and all of the World War II cemeteries, helps perpetuate this memory, though with shifting and multiple meanings with time. For some, the FACM demonstrates the long lasting effects war has upon the involved countries and populations. Of course, the consequences of war concern far more than the generations alive during the events; its impact continues to be felt for generations. Land and buildings are destroyed, national boundaries are redrawn, and families are torn apart during war.

These effects of war can be forgotten or glossed over with the passage of time. While the FACM ensures the sacrifices of life is made vivid, this place too elides some of the horrors.

If this study were to be taken further, I would want to talk to have in depth discussions with three groups of people; the local Italians who adopt a grave, the American World War II veterans who fought in the region, and the biological family of some of the deceased. In the case of the latter, I never encountered such a person throughout the course of my visits to the FACM. All of my information about them came secondhand from the administrative workers who had talked to them. These biological family members would have known the deceased in life, merging the biological, military, and adopted family into one point. Additionally, they could explain their family's reasoning in the decision to have their soldier buried at the FACM.

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As I am about to leave the FACM for the last time, a tour bus pulls up the drive and a dozen older looking couples disembark. The tour guide gives them a brief two-minute overview of the cemetery before distributing a carnation to each of the visitors to place on a grave of their choosing. They place them at random, although the graves of unknown soldiers receive more than their fair share of flowers. The visitors are back on the bus and pulling out of the FACM within fifteen minutes after their arrival. I am thinking about this tour group during my bus ride home. Were they able to gain a full sense of the sacrifice of lives during World War II? Will these people remember the FACM when they tell their family and friends about their Italian vacation? Or will the memory quickly fade away?

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