



North Mankato Post 518 Proudly Honors These



Veterans Of The Month

The Flag flying from this site is flown in honor of the "Four Chaplains" for the month of February by North Mankato American Legion Post 518.

On the evening of Feb. 2, 1943, the U.S.A.T. Dorchester was sailing, crowded with 902 servicemen, seamen & civilian workers. On Feb. 3, at 12:55 a.m., a periscope broke the chilly Atlantic waters. Through the cross hairs, an officer aboard the German submarine U-223 spotted the Dorchester and gave orders to fire torpedoes. The one that hit was decisive, striking far below the water line. In less than 20 minutes, the Dorchester would slip beneath the Atlantic's icy waters. According to those present, four Army chaplains brought hope in despair and light in darkness. Those chaplains were Lt. George L. Fox, Methodist; Lt. Alexander D. Goode, Jewish; Lt. John P. Washington, Roman Catholic; and Lt. Clark V. Poling, Dutch Reformed. Quickly and quietly, the four chaplains spread out among the soldiers. There they tried to calm the frightened, tend the wounded and guide the disoriented toward safety. One witness, Private William B. Bednar recalls. "I could also hear the chaplains preaching courage. Their voices were the only thing that kept me going."

Another sailor, Petty Officer John J. Mahoney, explained he had forgotten his gloves. "Never mind," Goode responded. "I have two pairs." The rabbi then gave the petty officer his own gloves. By this time, most of the men were topside, and the chaplains began distributing life jackets. It was then that Engineer Grady Clark witnessed that when there were no more lifejackets, the chaplains removed theirs and gave them to four young men. "It was the finest thing I have seen or hope to see this side of heaven," said John Ladd, another survivor. When giving their life jackets, they simply gave their life jackets to the next man in line with no regard to their faith. As the ship went down, survivors could see the four chaplains--arms linked and braced against the slanting deck. Their voices could also be heard offering prayers. That night Reverend Fox, Rabbi Goode, Reverend Poling and Father Washington passed life's ultimate test. In doing so, they became an enduring example of extraordinary faith, courage and selflessness.

The Distinguished Service Cross and Purple Heart were awarded posthumously December 19, 1944, to the next of kin by Lt. Gen. Brehon B. Somervell, Commanding General of the Army Service Forces. A one-time only posthumous Special Medal for Heroism was authorized by Congress and awarded by the President Eisenhower on January 18, 1961. The special medal was intended to have the same weight and importance as the Medal of Honor.

George L. Fox was born March 15, 1900 in Lewistown, Pennsylvania. In addition to George, he had a sister Gertrude and brothers Bert, Leo and John. When George was just 17, he left school, and with strong determination, convinced the military authorities he was 18 and joined the ambulance corps in 1917, shortly after the United States entered World War I. George was placed in the ambulance corps and shipped to Camp Newton D. Baker in Texas. On December 3, 1917, as a medical corps assistant, he was highly decorated for bravery and was awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart and the French Croix de Guerre. In mid-1942, George decided to join the Army Chaplain Service and he was appointed on July 24, 1942. He went on active duty August 8, 1942, the same day his son Wyatt enlisted in the Marine Corps. He was assigned to the Chaplains school at Harvard and then reported to the 411th Coast Artillery Battalion at Camp Davis.

Alexander D. Goode was born in Brooklyn, New York on May 10, 1911. His father was a Rabbi and his mother, Fay had two other sons, Joseph and Moses, and a daughter, Agatha. He planned to follow in his father's footsteps and become a Rabbi. Rabbi Goode applied to become a chaplain with the U.S. Navy in January 1941, but he was not accepted at that time. Right after Pearl Harbor, he tried again, this time with the Army, and received an appointment on July 21, 1942. Chaplain Goode went on active duty on August 9, 1942 and he was selected for the Chaplains School at Harvard.

Clark V. Poling was born August 7, 1910 in Columbus, Ohio. He was the son of Susie Jane Vandersall of East Liberty, Ohio and Daniel A. Poling of Portland, Oregon. Clark's siblings were Daniel, Mary and Elizabeth. Clark attended Whitney Public School in Auburndale, Massachusetts. He was appointed on June 10, 1942 as a chaplain.

John P. Washington was born in Newark, New Jersey on July 18, 1908. His parents were Frank and Mary; in addition they had daughters Mary and Anna, and sons Thomas, Francis, Leo and Edmund. Shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack of December 7, 1941, he received his appointment as a chaplain in the United States Army. Father Washington went on active duty May 9, 1942.

