

President Truman dedicating the Chapel and the rotating altars of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish faith.



According to news reports at the time, the loss of U.S.A.T. Dorchester was the greatest sea disaster of the war in now what is called the “Battle of the Atlantic.” In the aftermath of this tragedy, the acts of heroism by the Four Chaplains became widely known. The military reviewed the affidavits of the survivors and considered what type of medal they should be awarded. While there was some consideration of a Congressional Medal of Honor for the Chaplains, it was blocked by the stringent rules at that time that required acts of heroism be performed under enemy fire. Instead 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, in a ceremony at the post chapel at Fort Myer, VA.



Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., and Peter Lawford performing in a Four Chaplains benefit concert.

After the war, the father’s of one of the Four Chaplains, Rev. Daniel Poling of the Baptist Temple of Philadelphia, wanted to honor their memory and promote the interfaith courage and sacrifice that they inspired. Poling was a leading religious publisher and youth leader who Time Magazine called a “Dynamo of Good Will.” In September 1948 Rev. Daniel Poling announced his plans for a “Four Chaplains Memorial Chapel” and soon leading artists such as Frank Sinatra were taping national public service ads and elected officials from both political parties and veterans groups like the American Legion and religious groups like B’nai B’rith were raising money.

A unique aspect of the Four Chaplains Memorial Chapel design was a rotating circular altar that featured pulpits for a Protestant service, a Jewish Service and a Catholic Service. Built with the donations of 10,000 contributors of all faiths, President Harry S. Truman helped dedicate the chapel on February 3, 1951. President Truman said:

“Those four chaplains obeyed the Divine Commandment that men should love one another . . . This is an old faith in our country. It is shared by all our churches and all our denominations . . . The unity of our country comes from this fact . . .”

The dedication of the Four Chaplains Memorial Chapel did not end efforts to honor the legacy of the Chaplains. 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.



Four Chaplains Medal (1961)

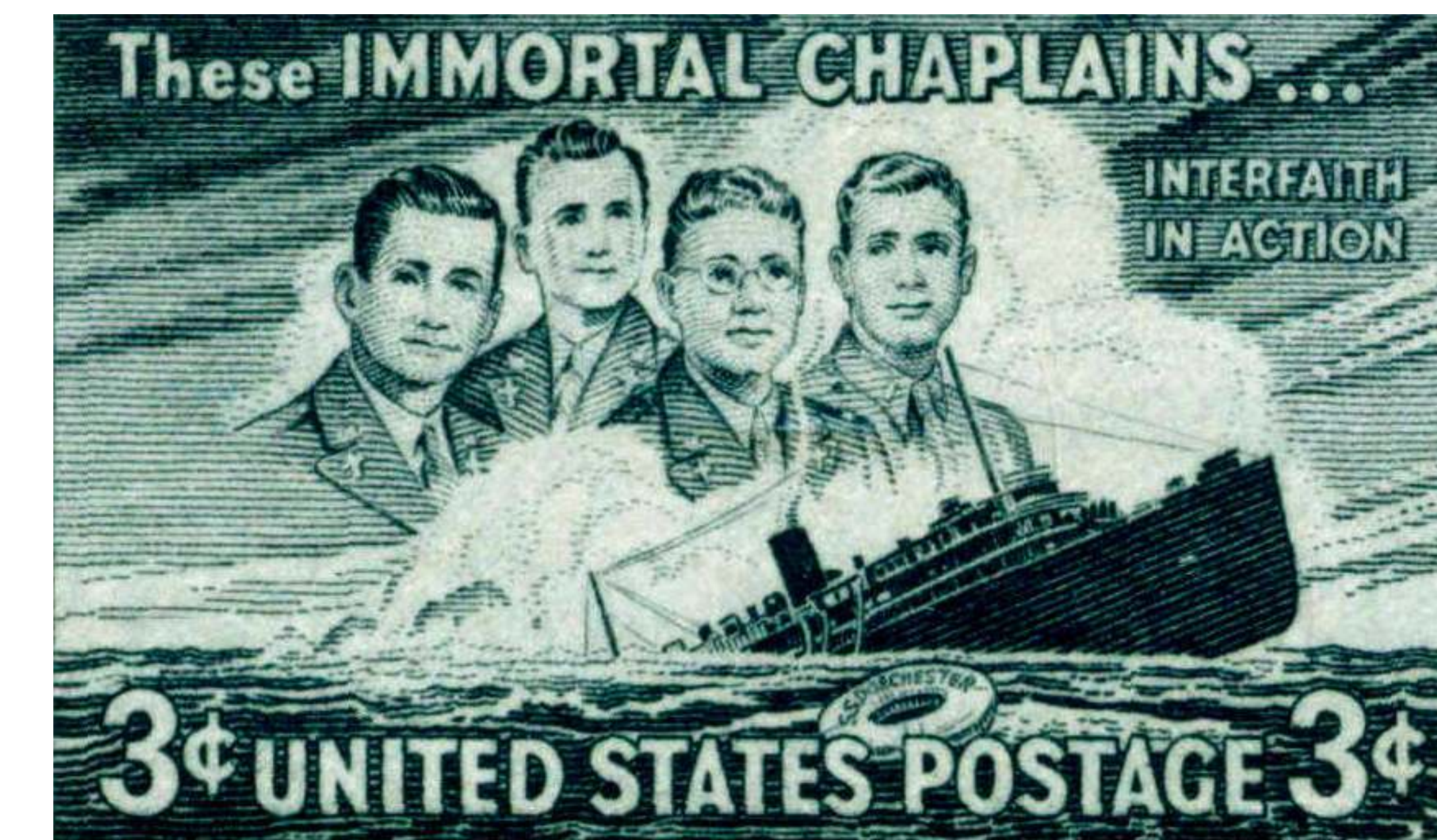
The legacy of the Four Chaplains is also honored in numerous locations around the country. One of the first was a swimming pool dedicated at Veteran’s Hospital in the Bronx in July, 1947. The Army Chaplain Center and School at Fort Jackson, South Carolina dedicated learning labs in their memory. Their heroism has been molded into stained glass at the Post Chapel at West Point Military Academy, the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. At Fort Lewis in Washington State there is a Four Chaplains’ Memorial Chapel & Family Life Center and at Fort Benning, Georgia, a Field of the Four Chaplains. One of the most beautiful monuments in their honor is the Four Chaplains Memorial at the National Memorial Park in Falls Church, Virginia near Washington D.C. The wing-like shape is symbolic of the faith of man and the spirits of the Four Chaplains ascending as the boat goes down. At Saint Stephen’s Church in Kearny, New Jersey a stained glass window above and plaque on the wall were dedicated inside the sanctuary to their former Priest while the road outside the church has been renamed Father John P. Washington Street. In York, Pennsylvania, where Rabbi Goode was an advocate for good schools, the Alexander D. Goode Elementary School was named in his honor. A chapel at the Vermont Veteran’s Home was dedicated in the memory of George Fox and his fellow chaplains. In 2011, USAT Dorchester Survivor Ernest Heaton announced that a memorial in honor of the Four Chaplains will be built in Sebastian, Florida.

Today, many decades after their original act of heroism, private organizations and public agencies around the country still meet in February to honor their memory. The Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation, still located in Philadelphia, continues to educate the public about the lives and legacy of the Four Chaplains. The Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation exists to further the cause of “unity without uniformity” by encouraging goodwill and cooperation among all people.

The organization achieves its mission by advocating for and honoring people whose deeds symbolize the legacy of the Four Chaplains aboard the U.S.A.T. Dorchester in 1943. It’s vision is to impart the principles of selfless service to humanity without regard to race, creed, ethnicity, or religious beliefs. The Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation, a 501(c)3 organization accepts nominations and helps public and private groups honor everyday citizens who have contributed to their community and leaders who have made significant contributions to our nation and the world. For more information about the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation, you can view our web site at [www.Fourchaplains.org](http://www.Fourchaplains.org), email us [chapel@fourchaplains.org](mailto:chapel@fourchaplains.org) or by calling our offices at 215-218-1943.



Current home of the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation is a former Naval Chapel in the South Philadelphia Naval Business Center, Pennsylvania



The Four Chaplains U.S. Postage Stamp issued by the United States Postal Service in 1948.



Bob Hope is one of many entertainers and public officials who has received an award from the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation for their service to their nation.