

**Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515**

Oral Testimony for H.R. 2788

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Members of Congress:

Abraham Lincoln once said "A nation that does not honor its heroes will not endure." Considering these words, the Distinguished Flying Cross Society has embarked on the construction of a National Memorial at the March Field Air Museum in Riverside County, California. This memorial is long overdue.

Awarded to aviators and aircrew for heroism and/or extraordinary achievement during aerial flight, the Distinguished Flying Cross is the only medal conferred by all five military services, in all wars and campaigns, from World War I to the present. The medal itself is highly symbolic of its recipients. The cross symbolizes sacrifice, the propeller represents flight, and the ribbon reflects our National colors.

From the first engagements in the air, military aviators have captured a special place in the hearts and minds of Americans. The vast majority of these aviators performed their duties in an admirable manner; however, the most courageous and valiant have been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Coming from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and races, the recipients of the Distinguished Flying Cross represent a microcosm of America. Each individual made a commitment to the achievement of the assigned mission beyond all other considerations. They put their country above their own lives and changed the course of history.

Whether prominent DFC recipients such as Charles Lindbergh, Jimmy Stewart, Chuck Yeager and Jim Lovell or a recipient, who lives in anonymity and quietly yet proudly wears the DFC, the United States has an obligation to honor its aviation heroes.

Congressman Ken Calvert has introduced H.R. 2788 into Congress to make the Memorial a true *National* Memorial as are the POW/MIA and Medal of Honor Memorials at the Riverside National Cemetery. Most notable, is the fact that the memorial is being developed with funds raised by the Distinguished Flying Cross Society and other private

sources. It is a true endeavor by the citizens of the United States and is located at the March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, California.

I am not a recipient of the DFC. However, I am the Distinguished Flying Cross Society's Historian and have had the honor of conducting and preserving oral history accounts of DFC recipients. In my entire association with this inspiring group of men and women, not one recipient has ever referred to himself or herself as being a hero. However, I call them all heroes and the United States should call them heroes and honor them as such.

Thus, on behalf of the Distinguished Flying Cross Society, I urge the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, of the Committee on Natural Resources, for your support of H.R. 2788: The Distinguished Flying Cross National Memorial Act.

I thank the Subcommittee for your consideration.

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