

Honoring Fallen Veterans with Memorial Procession

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HONOR PROCESSION BACKGROUND

- The VA WNY Healthcare Center has implemented into the standard operating procedures a memorial procession for all veterans that die in the hospital.
- This has increased staff self-awareness of the specialized needs of the dying veteran and family.



WARRIORS FINAL WALK

- Should a family member(s) wish to have a memorial procession, the nurse informs the staff and obtains a memorial procession pack which includes a morgue cart that resembles a coffin with an American Flag.
- Nurses who have prepared the body escort the deceased to where the family and staff are gathered.
- All staff is asked to gather on either side of the room or corridor.
- The point of contact (POC) thanks them for the privilege and honor of taking care of their loved one.
- The POC relates any personal anecdotes or stories, asks family or staff if anyone has anything else to share.
- The POC then asks permission to read called a poem called "Remembered Joy" or a poem/story of one's own choosing.
- POC asks family if they are ready for "the warrior's final walk".
- The nurses lead the procession by pushing the morgue cart slowly with the family following behind while Taps is being played and other veterans in the hallway salute.

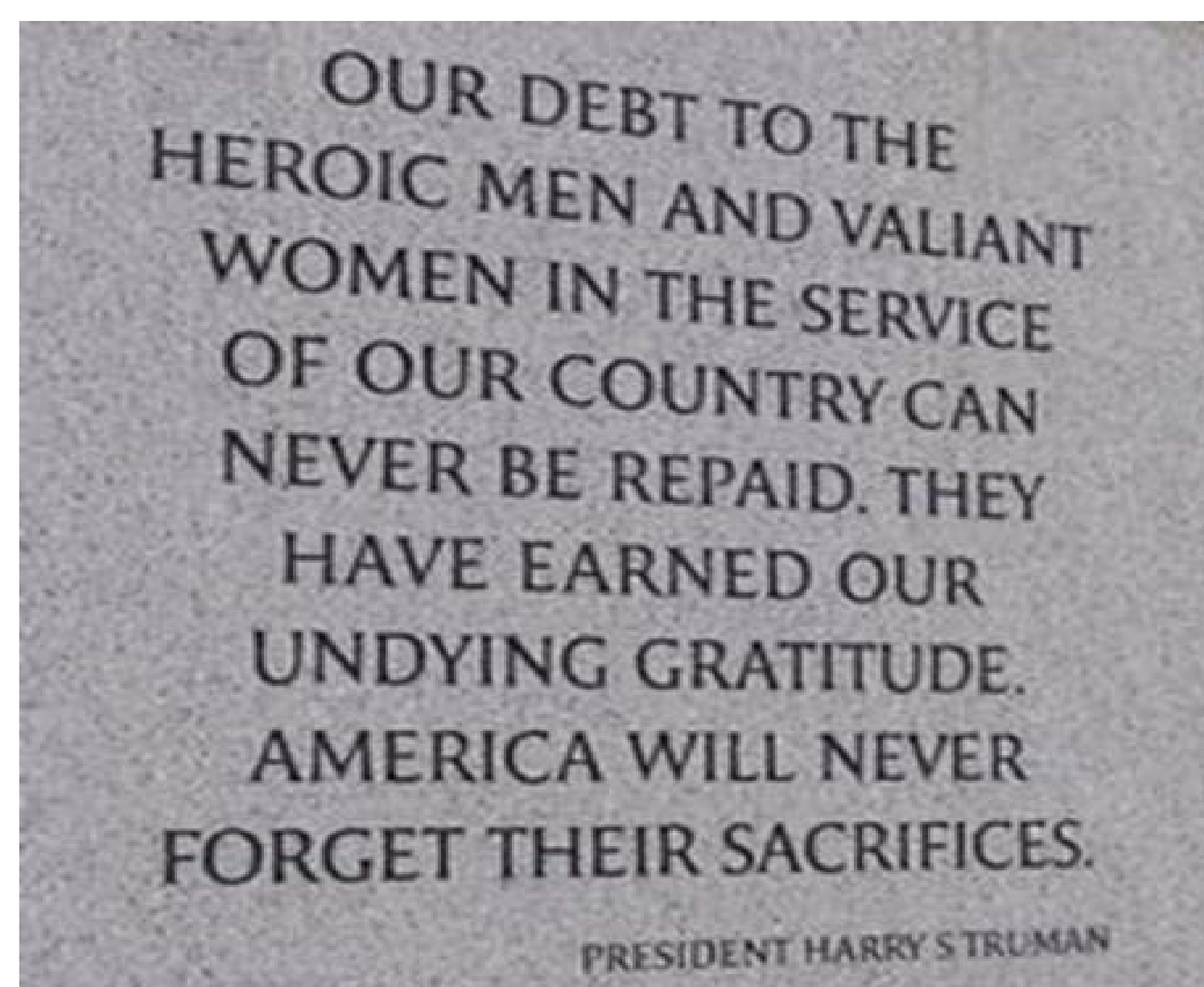
COMPARISON OF PRE AND POST PROCESSION

Nursing staff reported on a survey after being trained on doing the procession, seeing it occur, and watching the families perception of event.

- "I felt more at ease speaking to the family after a loved-one passed because I knew we had something wonderful to honor the veteran"
- "I am now more attentive to the dying veteran and the families because the procession training made me realize what is really going on"
- "It was such an honor to be apart of that- I felt like I could say my goodbyes too"
- "I was able to tell the family how much that veteran actually meant to me and what a pleasure it was to take care of that person"
- "I am less afraid of taking care of the dying"
- "Watching the family touch the flag and tell stories reminds me when I became a nurse"
- "I see how honored the family is when the staff gathers around the specialized morgue cart and tells stories even when it is from a short hospital stay"
- "It is so special to honor America's Heroes- we take care of World War II Veterans and it is so nice to see them off like that!"

ALL VETERANS ARE TREATED THE SAME

- All families of veterans, no matter what time the death occurs, are offered this service.
- Each acute ward, emergency department, and intensive care unit is trained in carrying out the memorial procession.



MORGUE CART COVER

