## Veterans await WWII memoria

By Jennifer C. Kerr THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Tears and pride mix as Navy veteran Ted Burke talks about the National World War II Memorial and its significance as a reminder of the sacrifices he and millions of others made.

Recently diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, the 83-yearold former torpedoman has made it his life's goal to make it to the Memorial Day weekend dedication on the National Mall.

"I hope and pray to the good Lord I'll be there," said Burke of Rehoboth Beach, Del., a former commander of the American Legion Department of the District of Columbia.

His daughter, Teddy Burke, choked back tears and said if her father cannot make it, "I'll be there for him, and I'll be the proudest person there."

The memorial being built on a 7.4-acre site between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial is the result of years of fund raising and armtwisting by veterans, including former Kansas Sen. Bob Dole.

Congress passed legislation in 1993 to authorize construction after veterans questioned why there were memorials for Vietnam, Korea and World War I veterans but nothing for those of World War II.

Dole said the memorial will be a wonderful tribute to what he called "the disappearing generation."

"You know, we didn't come back expecting somebody would build a memorial," said Dole, who was gravely wounded in combat. "We went back and a lot of us poor guys got to go back to school with the GI bill, others went back to work.'

The Veterans Department estimates that World War II veterans are dying at a rate of 1,056 a day — more than 385,000 a year. Mindful of this, memorial officials plan to open the site to the public in April, ahead of the dedication May 29.

"We want as many to be able to get in here and see this as we can," said project executive Barry Owenby. Of the 16 million who served during the war, fewer than 4 million are expected to be alive when the memorial is formally opened.

Ground was broken in September 2001. More than two years later, most of the granite and bronze is in place. The memorial has two hulking 43-foot arches and 56 smaller granite pillars that form an oval, encircling a sunken plaza and pool.

The pillars represent each state and territory from that era and the District of Columbia. Each is inscribed with the name of a state or territory, and topped off with two bronze wreaths.

The arches - one marked "Atlantic" and the other "Pacific" - symbolize the two theaters of the war. Inside, each has four bronze columns supporting huge American eagles that hold a suspended victory laurel.

Racing with time to honor veterans



Along the ceremonial entran to the plaza, there will be a series of 24 sculpted bronze panels, each depicting scenes of the war effor both at home and overseas.

Straight ahead, across th pool, is the "Freedom Wall which eventually will be con ered with 4,000 gold stars to commemorate the more than 400,000 Americans killed in the war. The gold star was the syn bol of the death of a family member in the war.

"I certainly don't begrudge memorials to the veterans other wars, but ours was a big one. And I think it's going to be a very fine tribute to my col leagues," said Eddie Dentz, of Woodbridge, Va. An Amy staff sergeant with the 106th Division, he fought in the Battle of the Bulge and was awarded Bronze Star.

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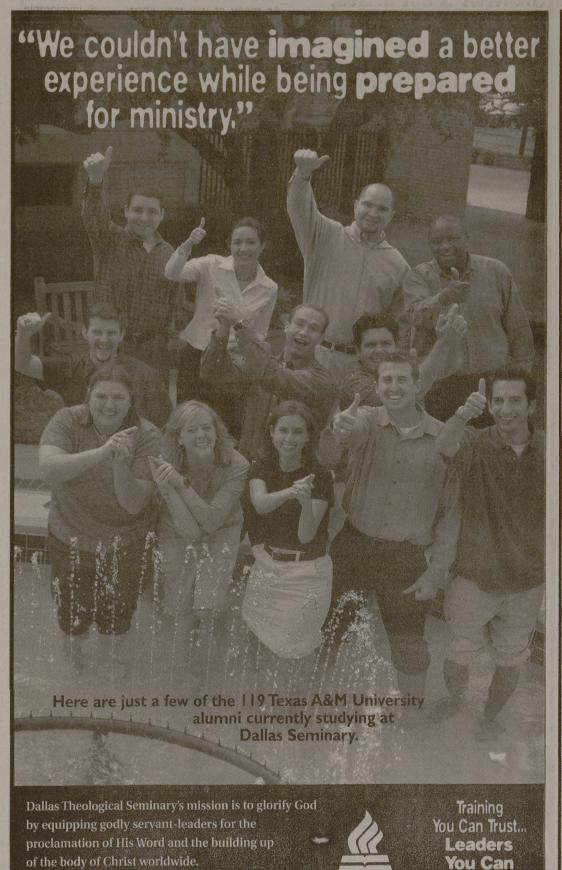
NEW YORK (AP) - A nonprofit group is looking for private donations to fund security improvements needed to reopen the Statue of Liberty, off-limits to the public since the Sept. 11

The federal government already has spent millions of dollars on upgrades, but about \$5 million worth of security measures still are needed before visitors can go inside the 151-

foot-high statue, National Park Service spokesman Brian Feeney said.

The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, which oversaw the statue's restoration in the 1980s, offered to help raise the funds, Feeney said.

The Statue of Liberty National Monument, a 58-acre island in New York Harbor, was closed to the public immediately after the attacks. The island was reopened in December 2001, by visitors can no longer enter the statue.



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