Freedom has its price, but forgetting is even more costly. That point was driven home for me again recently as I watched a television broadcast about a memorial service in Chicago. Last summer, as you may remember, a brutal heat wave in the Windy City claimed the lives of hundreds of people. I was stunned to learn that dozens of bodies who were victims of this tragedy went unclaimed. What a sad commentary on the anonymity of urban life. The city buried these "unknown citizens" in a mass grave. The circumstances were different, of course, but I remember being struck by the use of the same term that haunts the war in Bosnia. "Mass graves"—anonymous death—right here in the heart of our nation.

The broadcast I saw involved a group of veterans who learned that one of the unclaimed victims was a veteran of World War II. They gathered to pay tribute to their fallen brother. This deceased veteran, unknown to his neighbors in a bustling city, at last won some portion of the "honored glory" that was due him. I could not help but think that his death, and that of so many others last summer, was one more sign of the cost of our fracturing families. A group of veterans had stepped in to fill the void left by dissolving personal ties that leave so many older Americans alone and unattended.

This incident in Chicago is especially ironic, coming as it did in the middle of a year-long celebration of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. All across the nation, in countless ways, publishers, civic groups, and military associations have gone out of their way to commemorate the triumph of democracy over the forces of fascism and imperialism. Many of the celebrations focused on famed battlefields and renowned acts of heroism. Others featured well-known writers recounting "I was there" stories. The New York Times joined the celebration in May by publishing a collection entitled "Untold War Stories."

One writer told of a naval battle off Guadalcanal:

> *After dawn, a scouting plane found others of our ships still afloat in the bay, as well as a Japanese battleship listing badly, its steering gear crippled so it could only steam in circles. Japanese destroyers were beached on nearby islands. Japanese survivors were swimming in pools of oil and debris where other ships had gone down. Most of our ships in the bay were beyond salvage and had to be scuttled. The Japanese battleship was finished off by bombers.*

Another wrote of passing a company of American soldiers leaving the German front in September 1944:

> *As we marched up the road, we met a company of paratroopers returning from the front. They passed us in silence, without the wisecracks that soldiers exchanged in the movies. They had the stare of men who were meditating on shells and bullets. Night was falling.*

After the passage of so much time, it's striking how clear the memories are in these now-told stories. To one writer, the events of those days at war "are more vivid than this morning's coffee." Johnnie Stevens, a member of the all-black 761st Tank Battalion that fought with Patton in 1944, wrote plainly, "I was a platoon sergeant. All I remember is fighting and killing and freezing and starving and fighting and killing." Ann Darr, who flew military trainers as a WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilot) from 1942 to 1944, wrote of waiting for recognition of women's military service until the signing of special legislation on Thanksgiving Eve, 1977.

Reading all of these accounts, I thought naturally of my father, "Spike." He experienced unbelievable horrors in the South Pacific while serving in the Marine Corps during World War II. Physically and psychologically, he carried wounds that can only be fully understood by those who shared that experience.

My father is gone now, as are so many other veterans of that war. Others are passing from the scene. But memories of their acts of bravery and heroism must never, I pray, "fade away," as Gen. Douglas MacArthur said of an old soldier. It is our task to remember what they said and what they did. We may never stand an hour of watch in a driving rain to pay them tribute, but we can stand with them in another way. Here is my thought.

The Family Research Council is establishing an archive in honor of American veterans. Our goal is simple. As I learned at my father's knee, every man or woman who served this nation has something powerful to teach us about the meaning of freedom. Those personal stories, told as they happened, are often the most moving of all. We are asking you to help us assemble this archive of individual recollections. If you have a veteran in your family, or personal accounts written by a family member who served, we ask that you share their story with us.

I hope you'll send us these treasured personal stories. The material you send can be a photograph (please tell us who, what, when and where) or an anecdote, either written or recorded on a standard cassette. Perhaps a member of your family or someone you know is a veteran and is willing to record his or her experiences. This is an opportunity to become part of a living record of some very important times within our nation's history. Send your story to the attention of Karl Day, our Director of Correspondence. Karl is a West Point graduate, a former "Green Beret" and a Vietnam veteran. Make sure you keep a copy because we will not be able to return anything to you.

As our "family archive" grows, we intend to publish selections in various FRC publications in the coming years. Some will be included in an updated version of *A Family Fourth*, our commemorative booklet on the roots of American patriotism. By next Veterans Day, we hope to unveil a special exhibit at our new location that will honor the role of families in defending the cause of freedom. Come Thanksgiving Day 1996, Washington will have one more public expression of the manifold reasons we have to give praise to our generous and merciful Father.

And we will have a fine new location for this archive of memories. Next fall, the Family Research Council will move into new, permanent quarters in our nation's capital. Just a few weeks ago, ground was broken for the building that will mark our new address. As a tribute to the American home, the family of Edgar Prince, who served on the FRC board until his death this past March, and the Richard DeVos family are building a Family Center several blocks north of the Capitol building and just across the street from the National Portrait Gallery. We will be the building's major tenant.

FRC is privileged to be part of the combined dream of these two wonderful families for a permanent landmark honoring America's family life. I'm well aware of the unique position this Family Center will occupy in Washington. This city of legislators, judges, and regulators makes