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Honors US Government  
Knights of Columbus Essay

Brooklyn, New York. August 27, 1776.

The Battle of Long Island, also known as the Battle of Brooklyn, or the Battle of Brooklyn Heights was an important battle in the American Revolution, in which the Maryland 400 paid the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives to allow George Washington and the Continental Army to escape.

New York played a vital role throughout the revolution. It was important for commerce and was a key strategic position. That's why George Washington made efforts to fortify the city, accurately guessing it would be the British's next target. When the British attack came, Washington and nine-thousand of his men were cornered in Brooklyn Heights during the battle, surrounded on all sides with the East River to their back and easily outnumbered two to one. Washington's only hope was to use the strong East River current and a blanket of fog to escape before the British could mobilize their navy. But time was not on their side.

The First Maryland Regiment, now known as the Maryland 400, brought up the rear and, outnumbered and on the edge of disaster, did the unthinkable. They believed the British commanding general was in a stone house at his army's center, and surprised the British army with an unexpected and targeted assault. The 400 men exchanged volleys with some of England's finest troops. They charged the British six times, losing large amounts of men with each attack, then regrouping and hurling themselves at the British again. More than two-hundred and fifty of the Maryland soldiers were killed in their desperate attack, and George Washington was brought to tears and heard saying "Good God! What brave fellows I must lose this day!" In the end hardly any of the Maryland 400 escaped with their lives, but they

succeeded in diverting British attention long enough for the Continental Army to make their escape.

Of the original First Maryland Regiment, which consisted of twelve-hundred men, many had little experience and were either merchant's sons, dockworkers, school kids, or free and enslaved black youth. Reportedly only four had formal military training.

To me this sacrifice is incredible. The Continental Army was largely untrained and untested, especially early in the war. General George Washington had a difficult time keeping enlistees from running off when they heard the first shots of battle. The idea that this one group could drive themselves beyond their own personal fears and lay down their lives in this selfless way is extraordinary. It's a kind of bravery not often found, and the fact that all four-hundred committed to the charge together makes it even more significant.

Today we take for granted the liberties and comforts we have grown accustomed to, we don't remember what it took to get here or think about the sacrifices our military has made to preserve our way of life, at least not as often as we should.

It's easy to write about, it's a lot harder to find the courage in the right moment and go against the odds. This Regiment gave themselves up so we could have a chance at a better future. This is why the sacrifice of the Maryland 400 is significant to me.