



The statue of Herbert Burden faces towards six conifer trees. Burden was shot by a firing squad of six soldiers. Behind the statue are over 300 wooden posts, each one with an inscription commemorating soldiers shot for cowardice or desertion. Posts form the shape of a semicircle like an outdoor theatre or amphitheatre in ancient Greece. Greek actors sometimes performed violent and sad plays called tragedies in amphitheatres. This layout links the 306 soldiers to the sad or tragic deaths which characters suffered in ancient Greek plays. The statue of Herbert Burden has been deliberately positioned so that the first rays of the morning sun light it up, commemorating the fact that he was shot at dawn.



David Childs, the founder of the National Memorial Arboretum helped to raise money to build the memorial. He said that people now understand much more about how war makes people sick from illnesses like shell shock than they did during the First World War. He says that many of those soldiers shot were actually suffering wartime illnesses. “The youngsters, and they were mostly youngsters were as much victims of the conflict as many others.....we thought at least we could acknowledge that they had suffered in this way.”





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