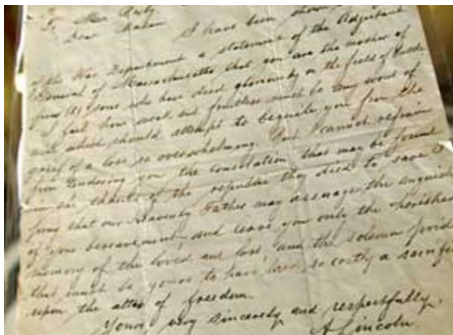


## History

On November 21th, 1864, Abraham Lincoln wrote the following to Mrs. Lydia Bixby of Boston:



Dear Madam,

*I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming.*

*But I cannot refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.*

*Yours, very sincerely and respectfully,*

*A. Lincoln*

Ever since then, the military has been keenly aware that legacies and families can be quickly destroyed in times of war.

In 1948, the **Sole Survivor Policy** or DoD Directive 1315.15 "Special Separation Policies for Survivorship" was enacted. It describes a set of regulations in the Military of the United States that are designed to protect members of a family from the draft or from combat duty if they have already lost immediate family members in military service.

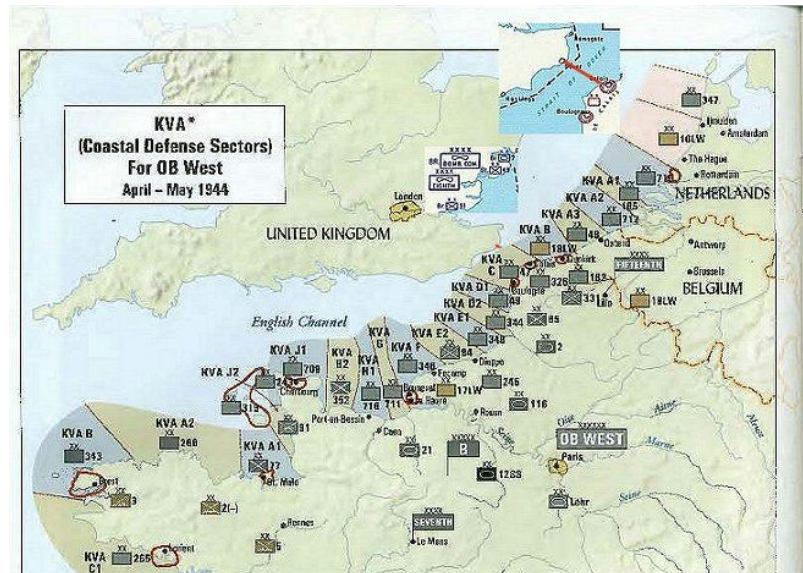
The directive basically stated that if a person's family was killed in action so that there was only one surviving member of that family left, that person would be removed from active duty.

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# Historical Setting



By 1944, the Nazis controlled most of Europe. As the Soviets pushed back Hitler from the East, American and British troops struggled to find a stronghold to push from the West. Due to Spain's declaration of neutrality, the Allies knew they had to somehow gain control of the northern coast of France. Hitler predicted this and built an unprecedented number of concrete bunkers housing giant artillery taken from gunships to defend the coastline.



On June 6th, 1944, Allied Troops began what is now known as the Battle of Normandy (D-Day). 156,000 American, British and Canadian forces landed on five beaches along a 50-mile stretch of the heavily fortified coast of France's Normandy region. The invasion was one of the largest amphibious military assaults in history and required extensive planning. Prior to D-Day, the Allies conducted a large-scale deception campaign designed to mislead the Germans about the intended invasion target. By late August 1944, all of northern France had been liberated, and by the following spring the Allies had defeated the Germans. The Normandy landings have been called the beginning of the end of war in Europe.

## Plot

Our film begins with the discovery that Private James Ryan's brothers have been killed in action and he is now the sole surviving son of his parents. Captain Miller is charged with the task of taking his men behind enemy lines to find Private James Ryan and bring him home. Surrounded by the brutal realities of war, while searching for Ryan, each man in Miller's unit embarks upon a personal journey and discovers their own strength to triumph over an uncertain future with honor, decency and courage.



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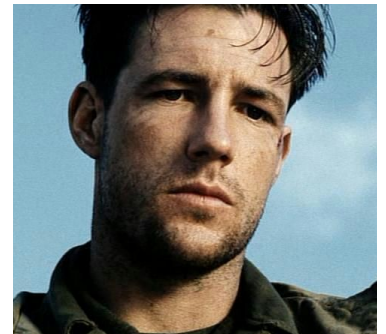
# Characters

**Captain Miller:** (Tom Hanks) Thirty-eight-year-old leader of the group. His job in civilian life is something of a mystery to his men and they find it very difficult to believe when they finally find out.



**Sergeant Horvarth:** (Tom Sizemore) Thirty-year-old, tough, experienced soldier whose priority is to protect his Captain even though he doesn't fully understand him. He is given the nickname "Sarge" by the squad.

**Private Reiben:** (Ed Burns) Twenty-four-year-old, smart-alec New Yorker who doesn't hide the fact that he resents risking his own life to save Ryan.



**Private Caparzo:** (Vin Diesel) Twenty-two-year-old tough Chicago Italian with a gentle side.

**Corporal Edward Wade:** (Giovanni Ribisi) Twenty-eight-year-old, from California: the unit's sensitive and dedicated medic. He takes great risks in order to save wounded soldiers, often with little success.





**Private Daniel Jackson:** (Barry Pepper) Twenty-three-year-old, deeply religious man from Tennessee – a marksman whose shooting skills turn out to be invaluable.

**Private Stanley Mellish:** (Adam Goldberg) Twenty-one-year-old Jewish soldier who has personal reasons for fighting the Nazis.



**Corporal Upham:** (Jeremy Davies) Twenty-four-year-old map-maker and translator who joins Miller's group when their interpreter is killed. More accustomed to office work than to fighting, he has a tough time adapting to the field.

**Private James Ryan:** (Matt Damon) The youngest of four brothers, brought up on a farm in Iowa. A simple soldier but with solid values of comradeship. He becomes a symbol for Miller and his men: if he goes home the whole group can go home.



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# The Message

*Saving Private Ryan* is about the heroism of soldiers doing what they believe is their duty in wartime, but as the plot develops the audiences is reminded that the physical combat of war is hell; that battlefield decisions made on the spur of the moment are often brutal; and that orders from the top can be absurd. Here, war is a sport played by commanders with too much power and too little understanding of human suffering.

At a personal level every man in Miller's unit has his beliefs challenged. Whatever their own feelings about what they are doing, they show bravery and courage as they take part in the war.

## Film as Art

*Saving Private Ryan* (1998) was written by Robert Rodat and directed by Steven Spielberg. Running almost three hours, the first twenty minutes realistically depict the Normandy invasion. The audience witnesses the most graphic, terrifying sequence ever made.