

**MEMORIALIZATION TO PRESERVATION: EFFORTS TO COMMEMORATE
THE VIETNAM ERA FROM THE 1980S TO THE PRESENT**

by

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I dedicate my research to the memory of those who have served our country with courage and bravery.

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ABSTRACT

The American public is still attempting to cope with the consequences of fully engaging in the Vietnam War. The public often welcomed these veterans home with unfavorable and hostile receptions, and it would take the United States nearly ten years after the withdrawal of troops before a national tribute would be offered to those who served. As the national Vietnam Veterans Memorial developed between 1979 and 1982, the American public again voiced their support and opposition for the war in an effort to shape the memorial's design and interpretive messages. Following its aftermath, throughout the 1980s, the United States would see similar debates surrounding the construction of Vietnam War memorials in local communities. Very few museums provide a cohesive social and military interpretation of the war. By examining the influences and public input into the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Vietnam War Foundation and Museum, examples of how to incorporate the complex and competing interpretations of the Vietnam War era can be explored.

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INTRODUCTION

The Vietnam War is considered as one of the most controversial wars in American history, and the United States is still trying to cope with the consequences of fully engaging Vietnam in 1964. Many organizations and museums have struggled to create exhibitions and memorials that fully depict the controversial narrative surrounding the Vietnam Era. Only a few museums throughout the United States, such as the Smithsonian American History Museum, have developed smaller exhibitions to both the military and anti-war efforts of the Vietnam War. However, the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum in Ruckersville, Virginia is currently the only museum that is dedicated entirely to the interpretation of the Vietnam Era. This thesis will broadly discuss the role that the American public memory played in the development of memorials, exhibitions, and museums that interpret the Vietnam Era from the 1980s to the present. As a whole, the thesis will discuss the historiographical literature and case study the American public reactions to the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. in the 1980s and the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum in Ruckersville, Virginia presently.

The historiography of American memorialization efforts and trends has become an increasingly popular topic, especially during the 1990s and early 2000s. Many historians attribute this sudden growth in literature to two significant events: 1) the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982, and 2) the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City in 2001. Chapter one traces the historiography of American memorialization and commemoration practices of war and tragedy from the American Revolution through 9/11. The chapter outlines the trends and themes that

greatly influenced the design and interpretive message of the statues and memorials. There are three key themes that are found throughout the United States' history of war memorialization, which include: 1) to formulate a sense of national identity, 2) to establish and maintain a lasting memory of influential figures in American history, and 3) to settle (or sometimes create) a contested political atmosphere.

The second chapter navigates through the American public responses to the development of a national memorial to represent the Vietnam War. Using primary resources, such as historical newspapers and Jan Scruggs' memoir, *To Heal a Nation: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, the chapter highlights how the American public responded to the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. By highlighting arguments both for and against the building of a national Vietnam War monument, the chapter traces the impact that vocalization. After case studying the national memorial, the chapter discusses how the dedication of smaller Vietnam War memorials compared to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

In light of the 50th anniversary, the third chapter discusses the United States' efforts to preserve the history and memory of the Vietnam Era through museums. The chapter features the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum in Ruckersville, Virginia, which was the first museum to dedicate their museum to the interpretation and preservation of the Vietnam Era. The history of the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum is followed by a narrative discussion of the other museums throughout the United States that are currently in the process of gathering funds to develop a museum that preserves and interprets the Vietnam Era, which include: The National Vietnam War Museum in Mineral Wells, Texas, the Vietnam War Museum of America in Garden Grove,

California, and the Education Center through the Wall by the Vietnam Veterans
Memorial Fund in Washington D.C.

CHAPTER I

MEMORIALIZATION IN AMERICA: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

“Every memorial in its time has a different goal.”
– Maya Lin, architect of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial¹

Nations erecting memorials to their leaders and heroes, especially during or following a time of war, is not a new concept. Some historians date the act of memorialization as early as the Ancient Egyptians in the 2500s BCE with the construction of the Pyramids of Giza. The citizens of the United States began memorializing their leaders and heroes less than twenty years after gaining their independence from Britain. As the United States developed themselves as one of the leading nations in the world, they continued to commemorate their leaders and political ideologies. Given the American penchant to memorialize military figures and action, this chapter will examine the current historiography of war memorialization within the United States by discussing the reasons people memorialize, the themes of memorialization, and its use over time.

Kirk Savage is the leading scholar on the American memorialization of war. In his article “The Self-Made Monument: George Washington and the Fight to Erect a National Memorial,” Savage explains the debate surround the United States’ first national monument, the Washington Monument, by introducing three key themes that surrounded the construction of statues of memorials to American military leaders and heroes. He argues that these themes are: 1) to formulate a sense of national identity, 2) to establish

¹ Academy of Achievement, “Maya Lin Interview – Academy of Achievement,” last modified September 22, 2010, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/lin0int-5>.

and maintain a lasting memory of influential figures within American history, and 3) to settle (or sometimes create) a contested political atmosphere. Savage, among other historians, believes that while these three themes are distinctly unique from one another that they are typically interwoven together. As Savage points out in his essay, these three themes worked directly together to build a cohesive national memorial, but it is precisely these overlapping themes that caused the memorial to take nearly one hundred years to construct. The charged political atmosphere between the Federalist and Anti-federalist led to debates on what the national identity of the United States should look like and what aspects of President George Washington should be remembered by the American public. As the debates between the two political parties went back and forth, the design for the Washington Monument continued to be simplified by the architects, until finally Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers minimized the design to the blank obelisk that is present today. Casey utilized his blank palette design to create a unified national identity by allowing each citizen to place his or her interpretation of George Washington upon the monument. Savage suggests, “the monument was revived not to make sense of the past, but to launch the nation into the future.”²

Savage continues his discussion of these three themes of memorialization in his first book, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America*. Here Savage argues the United States fostered a cultural marginalization of the enslaved in the creation of Civil War statues, both in the North and

² Kirk Savage, “The Self-Made Monument: George Washington and the Fight to Erect a National Memorial,” *Wintherthur Portfolio* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 236.

South, following the end of the war through the beginning of the nineteenth century. Savage observes that the Confederate Lost Cause mentality significantly impacted the design and interpretive message of the commemorative statues dedicated throughout the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Lost Cause interpretation maintains that the Confederate States of America fought the Civil War to defend the Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, which protected the rights of states, rather than over the issue of slavery. He notes that very few commemorative organizations of the Civil War commissioned architects to design statues or memorials that acknowledged the involvement of African Americans in the war, even though they encompassed roughly ten percent of the military personnel. Even the famous Freeman's Memorial by Thomas Ball depicting the emancipation of African Americans from slavery by President Abraham Lincoln does not portray African Americans on the same level as their white counterparts. Instead, it depicts Lincoln standing as a commanding figure standing over a kneeling, half-naked African American. Savage states that commemorative organizations, such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, believed that "simply to represent black slaves in sculptures was in a sense to emancipate them," which would go against their Lost Cause political ideology.³ While the Lost Cause memorials did not depict a unified national identity, it did help create and control a social group's identity by representing a particular shared memory during an identified period of time.

³ Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slave: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 16.

The design of memorials may reveal the motives behind their creation, but there are other factors that scholars have considered in their interpretation of war memorials. While Kelly McMichael's monograph *Sacred Memories: The Civil War Monument Movement in Texas* agrees with Savage's thesis that the Lost Cause politics greatly impacted the war memorials dedicated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States, McMichael focuses on the builders of the monuments rather than their designs. She notes that, throughout the United States (but especially in Texas), a large number of statues and memorials were built through funds raised by women, specifically the United Daughters of the Confederacy.⁴ In *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, Karen Cox presents a study of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and their role in the Lost Cause movement. Founded in 1894, the United Daughters of the Confederacy and other women's organizations dominated the efforts to memorialize the Confederate's past. Cox maintains that the women of the United Daughters of the Confederacy were the leading force of the Lost Cause commemoration efforts during the late nineteenth century, whose main objective was to vindicate the South and to achieve sectional reconciliation on their terms.⁵ A key contribution of *Dixie's Daughters* is Cox's examination of the women's role in the Lost Cause. Although the influence of the United

⁴ Kelly McMichael, *Sacred Memories: The Civil War Monument Movement in Texas* (Denton, TX: Texas State Historical Society, 2009).

⁵ Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of the Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003).

Daughters of the Confederacy on the Lost Cause commemorative efforts was vast, very few historians have examined their role in the movement.

Another essential contribution of Cox's monograph is her emphasis on the shift in the purposes behind memorialization for Civil War monuments throughout the South. Immediately following the aftermath of the Civil War, Confederate organizations erected statues and monuments in cemeteries as a means to mourn those who had died in battle, but Cox proclaims that in the mid-1880s the purpose of Confederate memorialization changed. She states, "The restoration of home rule in the South set the stage for building monuments that celebrated, rather than mourned, the former Confederacy and its heroes. In time, Confederate monuments also became permanent symbols of devotion to patriotic principles as southerners understood them. They helped to illustrate the part of the Lost Cause narrative."⁶ While Savage discusses a broader range of memorials by analyzing commemoration in both the North and the South, McMichael and Cox can apply basically the same themes to the southeastern region of the United States by examining the Lost Cause narrative within Civil War monuments.

Moving beyond the Civil War, John Bodnar's monograph, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and the Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, adds to the literature on memorialization efforts throughout the United States during the twentieth century. Trained as a social historian, Bodnar provides an analysis of public ceremonies and commemorations throughout the 1900s, ranging from the American Revolution to the Vietnam War, by examining the dynamic between national agendas and local attitudes. Bodnar combines Savage's themes of national identity, public memory,

⁶ Ibid., 66-67.

and a contested political atmosphere to analyze public memorialization in the twentieth century. He sees public memory as a form of national unity that is generally surrounded by a political battle for power or control. Bodnar defines public memory as a production “from a political discussion that involves not so much specific economic or moral problems but rather fundamental issues about the entire existence of a society. Public memory is a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future.”⁷ In *Remaking America*, Bodnar examines the commemorative efforts in the United States on a series of multiple levels. He offers a synopsis of the relationship between manifestations of state interest, which he refers to as “official culture,” and the particular emphasis of ethnic groups called “vernacular culture.” Highlighting specific immigrant communities in the Midwest, Bodnar discusses the control to display public memory following the aftermath of World War I and the dominant ideology of the melting pot. Bodnar argues that public memory tends to reflect concerns of the present and exemplifies current distribution of power. A fundamental contribution of *Remaking America* is Bodnar’s discussion of certain social and ethnic groups and their powerful influence in determining the representation of the Republic’s history as well as his emphasis on the vernacular culture.

Like Bodnar, Lisa M. Budreau examines the impact that the political atmosphere played on the commemorative efforts in the United States, but focuses specifically on the memorialization efforts of the fallen American military forces following the aftermath of World War I. During World War I, there were more than 100,000 United States troops

⁷ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and the Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 14-15.

who died in Europe. World War I was the first war that the United States government took full responsibility for the identification, burial, and memorialization of those who had fallen in the line of duty. The American government provided the next-of-kin a choice regarding their fallen loved ones. They could either permanently leave them in Europe in makeshift graves that would eventually be transformed into cemeteries, or they could have them shipped home for burial. As Budreau points out, the process of commemorating the dead became intensely political. Burdeau proclaims the “American collective remembrance of the First World War was largely a politically motivated exercise, driven primarily by factions, each with its own agenda.”⁸ In order to attempt to create a patriotic consensus of the public memory of World War I, the American government and military honored and utilized the war’s dead as a symbol to legitimize America’s participation in a war that was not fully supported by all of its citizens. She divides the politics associated with the competing groups involved in these commemorative efforts into three components: reparation, remembrance, and return.

The historical account of burying and commemorating American soldiers killed during World War I is an overlooked aspect of the United States’ war memorialization history. Budreau’s contribution with her book, *Bodies of War*, is that she uses a variety of primary sources from relatives of the dead soldiers to generate an understanding of commemorating those killed in action during World War I. Her examination of World War I commemoration efforts adds to the quickly growing literature on American war memorialization, a branch of historiography where much more analysis is needed.

⁸ Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 241.

Kirk Savage's most recent monograph, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* interweaves his original themes of national identity, public memory, and contested political atmosphere by tracing the development of an American national imagery. As an art historian, Savage examines the history of commemorative practices and monumental design executed on the National Mall in Washington D.C., ranging from the construction of the Washington Monument in 1791 to the addition of the World War II Memorial in 2004. In *Monument Wars*, Savage traces the total transformation of the National Mall's memorial landscape from its historic plan outlined by French designer Pierre Charles L'Enfant to the present while revealing its role in the national representation. Central to Savage's thesis is an examination of the dramatic shift from the nineteenth century concept of a decentralized landscape to the twentieth century idea of space. As already addressed by *Standing Soldier*, *Kneeling Slave*, *Sacred Memories*, and *Remaking America*, memorialization efforts of the nineteenth century, especially that of the Civil War, consisted primarily of statues of heroic war figures located throughout historic downtown traffic circles and picturesque parks. Savage highlights the memorialization shift away from these statues towards monuments that create a space of experience. He provides a two-fold focus on the monuments by discussing their interpretive character and the uses by citizens. This approach leads to a discussion about the shift in Washington D.C.'s memorial landscape from a place of public ground to public space. Throughout the twentieth century, some memorials were built to reconnect political groups and formulate a unified national

identity, such as the Lincoln Memorial dedicated in 1922, but over time, distinct groups use these memorials to incite a particular use of public memory for political gain.⁹

Savage discusses that while a majority of the national monuments on the Mall represent the people of the United States, they do not represent events that occurred in Washington D.C., which led to the nation's capital being a place for people to gather and bring light to a political topic or ideology. During the mid-twentieth century, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements utilized the Lincoln Memorial to host political demonstrations that brought attention to the inequality of African Americans and their white counterparts. Scott A. Sandage's essay, "A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Politics of Memory, 1939-1963," traces the nonviolent use of the Lincoln Memorial by African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement, when black protesters cultivated a politics of memory at the Lincoln Memorial. Sandage argues, "Within the sacred, national space of the memorial, activists perfected a complex ritual of mass politics, one that exploited the ambiguities of cherished American values to circumvent opposition, unify coalitions, and legitimate black voices in national politics."¹⁰ While African Americans were among the first group of citizens to utilize the memorial landscape of the nation's capitol, they were surely not to be the last.

⁹ Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).

¹⁰ Scott A. Sandage, "A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Politics of Memory, 1939-1963," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (June 1993): 136.

Veterans of the Vietnam War commonly used Washington D.C.'s memorial landscape in the 1970s and 1980s to generate a postwar effort to promote healing and reconciliation throughout the United States. *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* by Patrick Hagopian focuses on Savage's theme of national unity by sympathizing with the Vietnam veteran as a victim to mend a nation torn by war. Hagopian argues that the postwar national efforts to promote reconciliation have omitted a necessary calculation with the divisive politics of the war itself. He concludes that the national visualization of the Vietnam veterans as a victim was extremely powerful in generating support for Vietnam War memorials across the United States because it served as a neutral platform, which united the left and right in a mutual sympathy for the veteran.¹¹

Many historians credit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, dedicated in Washington D.C. by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, as the first victim memorial in the United States. In *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, Kristin Ann Hass introduces a new theme of commemorative efforts that is specifically unique to the concept of the victim memorial. Since its dedication in 1982, visitors to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial have been leaving objects, ranging from flowers to photographs to personal belongings, at the foot of the memorial. Hass argues that this act creates a sense of individual identity on a public stage. She asserts that those who leave objects at the memorial are leaving a piece of their individual identity, which in return leaves their personal mark on the national memorial. Additionally, Hass proclaims that

¹¹ Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 382.

these gifts left at the memorial's base are "part of a continuing public negotiation about patriotism and nationalism," which "forge a new mode of public commemoration that suggests ordinary Americans deeply crave a memory, or a thousand memories together, that speaks to ways in which this war disrupted their sense of American culture and their place in it."¹² Objects left at the memorial's base have transformed the memorial's interpretation on a daily basis. The National Park Service collects the objects left by visitors at the wall and sends them to a collection facility in Maryland. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund now displays these objects digitally in preparation for a future Visitor Center near their memorial.

While the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the first victim memorial, and as a direct result the first national memorial to have objects left at its base, it would not be the last. Beginning in the 1980s, the concept of the victim memorial became a popular trend in American memorialization efforts and has continued to the present. Hass also connects this theme of individual identity in the public arena through victim memorials to the AIDS Quilt Memorial on the National Mall throughout the mid-1980s. Marita Sturken's book, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*, analyzed the ways the United States' culture has been transformed by its responses through memorialization to the AIDS epidemic and the Vietnam War during the 1980s and 1990s. By examining the relationship between the media and the production of cultural memory, Sturken argued that media's interpretations of these events have distorted our understanding of American national identity and that these

¹² Kristen Ann Hass, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 3.

memorials serve as a means of healing that can ease the political tensions of the era.¹³

During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the historiography of American memorialization and commemorative efforts began to take a dramatic shift away from discussing war memorials' role in building (or rebuilding) national identity towards a conversation of emotion's role in the construction of American memorials. Erika Doss, in her thesis *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, utilized Hass's theme of presenting an individual identity on the public stage by examining America's response to tragic events. By tracing the emergence of the memorialization culture following the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Hass tracked the transitions away from a public commemoration of heroic people and events towards the memorialization of tragic incidents. Hass believed that the obsession with memory and history created an immediately need to claim the issue in the public sphere and that the construction of memorials in the wake of tragedy establishes a necessary part of the American healing ritual. Hass categorized the American response to historical events into five major emotions: grief (Columbine), gratitude (World War II Memorial), fear (9/11), shame (Holocaust Memorial Museum), and anger (contestations of American identity, such as Mount Rushmore). An essential contribution of *Memorial Mania* is Hass's examination of cultural values that reflect society's understanding of the contemporary reality through historical and social contexts, which generates a perception of how a

¹³ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

culture develops mechanism for the acknowledgment of significant events and individuals in that society's culture.¹⁴

Kenneth E. Foote continued Hass's theme creating a sense of national identity through emotional responses in his book, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscape of Violence and Tragedy*. Foote explored the psychology of place by examining the experiences, beliefs, values, and attitudes that directly impact the United States' collective unconscious that leads to individual sites of tragic events being glorified, while other historic sites are completely forgotten or ignored in American memory. Foote concluded that there are four primary responses that American citizens have to sites of violence and tragedy: sanctification, designation, rectified, and obliteration. He defined sanctification as the act of harboring a deeper meaning for sites of violent events, which help forms a nation's identity. In the case of these places of tragedy, the nation typically dedicates it as an official site of historical significance, such as the Gettysburg National Military Park and Cemetery. A designation site is widely recognized to be significant by the American public, but is not officially dedicated by the national government. The Loraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee where Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated is categorized as a designation site. According to Foote, when a site is rectified, the site returns to its previous use despite the past tragedies that occurred there. Lastly, a site of obliteration is place that has been entirely demolished when the violence of the events

¹⁴ Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

that occurred there are too horrendous to remember, such as house of serial murderer John Wayne Gacy of Chicago.¹⁵

Marita Sturken's most recent book, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*, examined the nation's emotional response to tragic events through the lens of consumerism by case studying the bombing of Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995 and terrorist attacks of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. Sturken maintained that in the aftermath of these events a public sense of fear and loss produced an enormous consumer demand for objects of comfort, such as teddy bears. This demand indicated a retreat into consumerism rather than a confrontation with the dreadful realities of these events and their impact on the nation's identity. Sturken stated, "Comfort culture and consumerism of kitsch objects of emotional reassurance are deeply connected to the renewed investment in the notion of American innocence. American national identity, and the telling of American history, has been fundamentally based on a disavowal of the role played in world politics by the United States not simply as a world power, but as a nation with imperialist policies and aspirations to empire."¹⁶ Sturken asserted that a kitsch comfort culture contributes to a "tourist" relationship to history. By visiting sites of national mourning and purchasing commemorative objects, Americans can find a sense of comfort without having to engage with the political, social, and economic causes of violent events.

¹⁵ Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997).

¹⁶ Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 7.

Since the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., American memorialization efforts have stimulated many historians in a multitude of ways. Historians have analyzed American commemoration and memorialization efforts through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and their impact on politics, culture, and economics. Interestingly though, the National World War II Memorial fits the themes of earlier commemorative projects, but due to its delayed dedication in 2004 it has not yet made its way into the historiographical record. As time distances us from the dedication of the World War II Memorial, it will be interesting to see where it falls into the current historiography of American commemorative and memorialization efforts. This thesis will add to the current body of scholarship available by discussing not only the efforts to memorialize the Vietnam War throughout the United States, but also the creation of museums that specialize on the Vietnam Era to preserve its memory. While there are several monographs that discuss the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., there is currently zero literature on the current museums that are dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the Vietnam Era.

CHAPTER II

THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL: THE VOCALIZATION OF MEMORIALIZING THE VIETNAM ERA IN THE 1980S

“If history taught any lessons about memorials, it was that they could not be built until passions cooled and everyone who had directly experienced the events being memorialized had passed from the scene.” - Jan Scruggs, founder and president of Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund¹

On August 2, 1964, the Tonkin Gulf Incident set in motion a series of decisions and actions that committed the United States to a sustained conflict in North Vietnam for over a decade, even though the United States had devoted economic and military aid to South Vietnam since the early 1950s. Scholars consider the Vietnam War the longest, and perhaps most controversial, war in American history. The political and social issues surrounding the Vietnam War quickly divided the American public on the morality of entering a war in Vietnam, leading to the formation of the groups known as the “hawks” and the “doves.” These protests and debates over the Vietnam War did not end with the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. Divisions over America’s presence in Vietnam could still be seen nearly a decade after the removal of all United States’ forces, especially during the American efforts to memorialize the war.

Memorialization is not a new concept. Memorials exist around the world, serving as a tribute to warriors, independence, death, and a number of other issues. In their simplest form, memorials assist with the recognition and preservation of memories about a particular event, person, place, or time. As American memorialization efforts grow, the trends of American memorialization practices have developed as a popular topic in recent

¹ Jan C. Scruggs, and Joel L. Swerdlow, *To Heal a Nation: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1985), 29-30.

American historiography, especially during the 1990s and early 2000s. In *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*, Kirk Savage argues that in the 1970s the United States begins to see a shift from the use of statues to remember and/or honor a political ideology towards the use of memorials to commemorate a select group of people, a historical event, or political ideology. Likewise, Erika Doss in her book, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, argues that the “growing numbers of memorials represent heightened anxieties about who and what should be remembered in America[n]” history, which is a result of the transition from statues to memorials.² Doss traces the popularization of memorials in the United States since the mid-twentieth century by exploring the cultural, social, and political situations that informed the historical memories and feelings into five broad categories. She believes a memorial can embody emotions, such as grief, fear, gratitude, shame, and anger.

In his essay, “Why Do Contemporary Monuments Talk So Much?,” Dell Upton agrees with Doss. Upton recognizes two major periods in which memorialization is a popular trend in American history. The first wave of memorials occurred between the 1880 and 1930, as “reassertions of values that monument builders believed need reinforcement amid turmoil.”³ Examples of memorials of this period include the Lincoln Memorial, Stonewall Jackson monument (Charlottesville, Virginia), and the Statue of

² Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 2

³ Dell Upton, *Commemoration in America: Essays on Monuments, Memorialization, and Memory*, (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2103), 20.

Liberty. The second movement of memorial building began in the 1980s, starting with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. Upton claims the Vietnam Veterans Memorial forever changed the ways in which Americans commemorate specific people, places, and events. Upton argues this is because there was no longer a single voice attempting to memorialize the American past, which resulted in “fragmentation of representation and representativeness.”⁴ Evidence of this can be seen in the additions that were made to the original design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which included a staff for the United States’ flag, Frederick Hart’s sculpture *Three Soldiers* (1984), and Glenna Goodacre’s Vietnam Women’s Memorial (1993).⁵ Each of these additions attempted to tell a version of the Vietnam War’s history that was absent from the engravings of the American soldiers’ names that died for their country in Vietnam. Because of the political and moral division amongst Americans on the issue of the Vietnam War, the United States has roughly 2,500 memorials dedicated specifically to the Vietnam veterans.⁶ While the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was not the first monument to memorialize the Vietnam War, when it was dedicated in 1982, it was recognized as the most significant commemoration of the war.

⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁶ In this context, the author is using the term “memorials” broadly. The number, 2,500, includes all highways and plaques dedicated to the veterans of Vietnam War as well as traditional means of commemoration like statues and memorials. Albert J. Nahas, *Warriors Remembered: Vietnam Veterans—Welcome Home* (Indianapolis, IN: IBJ Book Publishing, 2010), xi.

In the 1980s, memorialization of Vietnam veterans became a popular trend in the United States, especially following the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. The number of memorials dedicated to Vietnam veterans peaked in the 1980s.⁷ Vietnam veterans, commonly in association with the state chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America, dedicated a majority of these memorials. Beginning in the early 1990s, the number of Vietnam memorials began to decrease significantly; however a small spike in the number of memorials appeared following the 25th anniversary of the fall of Saigon in 2000. Throughout the early process of memorializing the Vietnam era, the American public voiced their contested memories and perspectives on how the United States should commemorate and remember their involvement in Vietnam. This chapter will examine the role and overall impact of the American public's opinion on the memorialization of the Vietnam Era in the 1980s by case studying the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., and compare those vocalizations and outcomes to other memorials dedicated to the Vietnam War in the 1980s within the United States. We will find that the American public was just as divided on memorializing the Vietnam War, as they were on the war itself.

⁷ This data is based on the ninety-one memorials that Albert J. Nahas highlights in his book, *Warriors Remembered*.

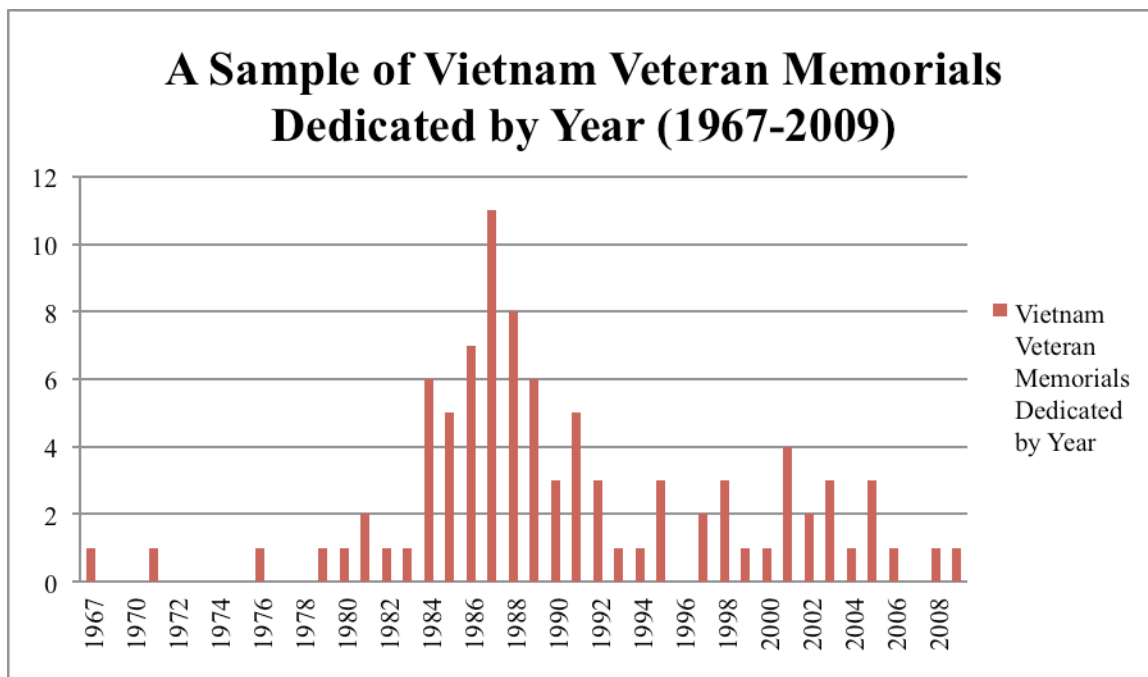


Figure 1: A Sample of Vietnam Veteran Memorials Dedicated by Year (1967-2009)

This graph represents the number of memorials that were dedicated each year from 1967 to 2009 to Vietnam veterans in the United States. These numbers are based on the ninety-one memorials highlighted in Albert J. Nahas's book *Warriors Remembered*. Graph created by the author.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Controversy

In 1978, Universal Pictures released *The Deer Hunter*, a film renowned for the way it examined the impact and effects of the Vietnam War on an industrial town in Pennsylvania. The following year, Jan C. Scruggs, a former rifleman with the United States Army 199th Light Infantry Brigade, watched the film. After seeing the motion picture, Scruggs experienced haunting flashbacks to his days in Vietnam and the friends he had lost in combat. The following morning Scruggs told his wife, "I'm going to build a memorial to all the guys who served in Vietnam. It'll have the name of everyone

killed.”⁸ Thus began Scruggs’ extensive endeavor to build a national memorial that not only honored more than 58,000 soldiers who perished in Vietnam, but also attempted to rehabilitate a nation that was so profoundly divided by the war.

After recruiting two attorneys, Bob Doubek and Jack Wheeler, Scruggs established a non-profit organization that served as the financial management backbone of the national Vietnam memorial. By April 1979, Scruggs and Doubek incorporated the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to collect ideas and suggestions for the memorial (open to any devoted veteran or citizen).⁹ Members of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund understood that the Vietnam Era was too long and complex to attempt to construct a memorial that collectively portrayed the complex politics and emotions of the era. Nonetheless, they agreed that they could build a memorial that would serve as a “powerful symbol of national reconciliation.”¹⁰

Following the establishment of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the organization set an ambitious timeline for the construction of their memorial. By the end of 1980, they hoped to obtain a piece of land within the Constitutional Gardens under the

⁸ A majority of the organizational history pertaining to the establishment of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is gathered from Scruggs and Swerdlow’s book, *To Heal a Nation*. This is because after I contacted the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund about organizational history, they informed me that they did not have any public records dating back to the creation of the organization from 1979 through 1982 currently indexed for research., and the deadline for the thesis did not allow for such a search through their records. When asked if Scruggs remembered anything about the authors of who sent in these letters I never received a response from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Scruggs and Swerdlow published this book only three years after the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated in 1982. Jan Scruggs is the founder and president of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Scruggs and Swerdlow, *To Heal a Nation*, 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

shadow of the Lincoln Memorial. In 1981, the group planned on finishing the fundraising of the \$7,000,000 needed to complete the production of the memorial. They yearned to complete the construction of the memorial in 1982, so that it could be dedicated on Veterans Day of the same year.¹¹ Amazingly the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund achieved their very short and ambitious timetable for the memorial. Throughout every step of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, from theoretical ideas to finalized construction, Americans expressed their opinion about the project.

As early as late 1979, major news publications, such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund began to receive letters both supporting and opposing the establishment of a national memorial to Vietnam veterans. Former supporters of the antiwar movement typically disapproved of the memorial entirely, arguing it did not reflect the era as a whole. Many of the former antiwar activists worried that the memorial would only praise the efforts of the war and not show any evidence of the antiwar movement. In a letter to the editor in the *Washington Post*, Tom Chorlton, a Vietnam War protester, wrote,

The tens of thousands of young Americans who were forced—through the draft—to fight the immoral war certainly deserve better treatment today and adequate recognition of their suffering by history. ... If this memorial is to serve any positive purpose, it must include all war resisters who were imprisoned for resisting the draft. ... This is the minimum, the very least that must be demanded by the tens of thousands of us who also suffered by trying to bring our country to its senses.¹²

Only a week after Chorlton's letter appeared, retired Lt. Colonel E.D.W. Springarn replied to the letter by proclaiming, "As a veteran of World War II and the Korean War, I

¹¹ Ibid., 12.

¹² Tom Chorlton, "Victims of War," *The Washington Post*, November 30, 1979.

must protest Chorlton's letter. It is not only self-serving, but also blatantly anti-American. To allow the draft dodgers to share the benefits of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, as he proposes, is totally unacceptable."¹³ Others criticized the creation of the memorial because they believed that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund should use the money differently, honoring and assisting the Vietnam veterans who had returned home. Many Americans and veterans thought resolving issues, such as Agent Orange, veteran unemployment rates, and homelessness, would be more useful to the Vietnam veterans than a memorial. Several people likewise wrote to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund expressing their support or opposition to the memorial. One letter proclaimed, "The memorial is a stupid thing when so many of the surviving veterans are so sick and suffering with no place to turn to."¹⁴ Another one asked, "What have you done to clean up filthy V.A. hospitals?"¹⁵

On the other hand, Vietnam veterans and their families tended to support a memorial. They agreed with Jan Scruggs and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund that the memorial would serve as an instrument for healing a nation so deeply divided by the war. One letter to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund read, "I hope your memorial can heal many of the hurts that that unfortunate war has caused. It lies there like unfinished business."¹⁶ Even among supporters, there were differences regarding the memorial. A

¹³ E.D.W. Springarn, "Protesting a Proposal," *The Washington Post*, December 7, 1979.

¹⁴ The authors of these letters are unknown because Scruggs and Swerdlow do not contribute an author to any of the letters he quotes in his book. Scruggs and Swerdlow, *To Heal a Nation*, 27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

portion of the Vietnam veterans wished the memorial would pay tribute to all who had served in the Vietnam War, not just those who died. In a letter to the editor in the *Washington Post*, United States Navy Commander Timothy J. Vogel wrote, “The sacrifice of these men and especially those who returned disabled or from imprisonment should not be concealed from the American public. Traditionally, when we honor our veterans, we honor *all* our veterans, and there is no cause for differentiation now.”¹⁷

Except collecting the necessary funds needed for the memorial, the first major battle for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund involved acquiring the land for the memorial. They desired a specific section of the Constitutional Gardens that was near the Lincoln Memorial for two main reasons. First, they argued the memorial would not be ignored if it were located so close to the famous Lincoln Memorial. Second, they pointed out the two memorials were very similar because they brought together a nation that was divided by war, which was the ultimate goal of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Acquiring this location proved to be a difficult challenge for them, a challenge that the American public regularly provided commentary on.

The United States federal government owns the land that makes up the Constitutional Gardens, and the National Park Service maintains the property. Since the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund wished to acquire land that could not be purchased, they had first to attempt to win the approval of the National Capital Memorial Advisory Committee.¹⁸ The committee consists of members from each body of government who

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁷ Timothy J. Vogel, “Inadequate Memorial,” *Washington Post*, May 16, 1981.

¹⁸ Scruggs and Swerdlow, *To Heal a Nation*, 16.

decide on the memorials in and around Washington D.C. Doubek and Scruggs presented the intentions of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund on October 24, 1979 to the committee. The committee extended an invitation to continue the discussion for the following January, but told Doubek and Scruggs “they would oppose site-specific legislation.”¹⁹

Hearing of the unsuccessful attempt, former Marine officer James Webb suggested the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund present a draft of the proposal that they had submitted to the National Capital Memorial Advisory Committee to Congressman John Hammerschmidt of Arkansas.²⁰ Only a few days after Hammerschmidt heard their proposal, he introduced the legislation into the House of Representatives. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund hoped Congress would approve the memorial’s site before Memorial Day in 1980. The legislation originally passed through Senate with all one hundred members as co-sponsors and received 196 cosponsors in the House of Representatives.²¹ Even though a majority of Congress seemed to approve the legislation, some officials were still reluctant to support the idea of the memorial. Representative Tom Daschle of South Dakota announced he did not co-sponsor the memorial proposal because “it seems to me that for every block of mortar in a memorial, there ought to be a block of support for Vietnam veterans that is not tangible. That’s where the commitment for a memorial ought to be, because we tend to wash our hands of responsibility after we

¹⁹ Ibid., 17.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ward Sinclair, “Vietnam Memorial: Another Symbol of Frustration for Vets,” *The Washington Post*, May 26, 1980.

build a memorial.”²² Daschle, like many others, believed that the United States government should be providing more monetary funds to Vietnam veteran organizations that assisted veterans with psychological and health issues rather than spending their resources helping a private organization build a national memorial.

Ultimately Congress failed to approve the legislation by Memorial Day. While the proposal was in the House of Representatives, Representative Philip Burton of California raised questions about the wording of the legislation. Based on Burton’s comment, the House of Representatives adjusted the language, so that it did not specifically state the land would be located on the Mall. This quick change allowed for the passage of legislation in the House of Representatives, but the Senate could not reach an agreement in time, leaving the decision to President Jimmy Carter. During the Rose Garden Ceremony on July 1, 1980, President Carter signed the resolution to permit the construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. At the ceremony, Carter declared that the memorial would be a “reminder of the past, what was lost and a reminder of what we learned. We do not honor war, but we honor the peace and freedom we sought.”²³

Immediately following the presidential signing of the memorial proposal, the *Washington Post* released statistics from a survey by the Office of Veteran Affairs. According to Veterans Administrator Max Cleland, the survey revealed that “66 percent of the public thinks the federal government should do more for Vietnam-era veterans, and most say they feel more positively toward veterans of the unpopular war.”²⁴ This survey,

²² Ibid.

²³ “Carter Clears Vietnam Memorial,” *The Washington Post*, July 2, 1980.

however, did not necessarily directly reflect the entire nation's opinion of the construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., because the survey did not ask directly about the memorial. In a *Washington Post* article published in May 1980, Steve Champlin of the Vietnam Veterans of America proclaimed, "There is no political cost in lining up behind the flag and supporting a veterans' monument, but members of Congress won't line up on more important issues like psychological adjustment aid or treatment of Agent Orange victims."²⁵ Due to the American public's complex legacy and politics surrounding the Vietnam War, they continued to provide conflicting support and opposition about the memorial. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund continued to push forward with their intentions as the American public weighed in.

Now with legislation signed by President Carter, the next step for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund was to figure out how they would choose a design for the memorial. They decided that they would host an open design competition, so they selected a jury of some of the most prominent artistic professionals to judge the contest. The board of directors for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund interviewed a series of potential jurors before selecting the final committee. After completing the interview process, they nominated Pietro Belluschi, Harry M. Weese, Garrett Eckbo, Hideo Sasaki, Richard H. Hunt, Constantino Nivola, James Rosati, and Grady Clay to judge and select the winning memorial design.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Sinclair, "Vietnam Memorial," May 26, 1980.

²⁶ Scruggs and Swerdlow, *To Heal a Nation*, 52. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund selected a jury of eight internationally recognized artists and designers. The judges

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund accepted design applications from the beginning of January until March 31, 1981. In total, they received 1,421 entries for the memorial design competition.²⁷ From April 27 to May 1, the jurors met at the Andrews Air Force Base to deliberate and choose the winning design. To ensure that the contest remained impartial, the jurors wanted the creators of the designs to remain anonymous until they picked the winner, so they assigned a number to each design entry. After a week of discussion, the jury unanimously selected design 1026 as the winner.²⁸ Maya Ling Lin designed 1026. Maya Lin was only twenty-one years old, and an art student at Yale University.

Lin's entry for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is relatively simple in design. Based on her design, the memorial consisted of two walls that gradually grew in height until they met in the middle at a wide angle. She did not want to detract from the surrounding landscape, so she designed the memorial to be cut into the earth instead of it protruding from the ground. Unlike any other memorial in the Constitutional Gardens, Lin's design called for black granite. On the memorial itself, the name of every United States servicemen killed in Vietnam would be engraved.²⁹ Lin's seemingly simple design

included two landscape architects, two structural architects, an expert on urban development and landscape, and three sculptors. Pietro Belluschi, architect; Grady Clay, author; Garret Eckbo, landscape architect; Richard H. Hunt, sculptor; Costantino Nivola, sculptor; James Rosati, sculptor; Hideo Sasaki, landscape architect; and Harry Weese, architect. Paul D. Spreiregen served as competition professional adviser.

²⁷ Ibid., 58.

²⁸ Ibid., 63.

²⁹ According to the design competition guidelines outlined by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the winning design must include an inscription of every

provoked the largest volume of contested opinions on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial from the American public.

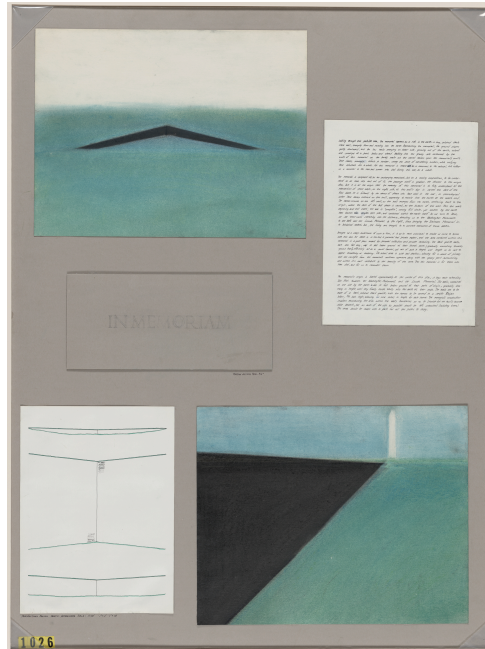


Figure 2: Maya Lin's Original Design

Original photograph of Maya Lin's design and artist statement for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that she entered into the competition of March 1981 to build a national Vietnam War memorial. Photograph courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, November 2014.

Newspaper articles and published letters to the editor quickly began to appear in the *Washington Post* opposing Maya Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. In these letters and articles, the protestors were no longer voicing their concerns on issues like Agent Orange, but rather on the flaws they saw with her design. Vietnam veterans authored a majority of the letters and articles opposing the design. In less than two weeks after the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund announced the winning design, a Vietnam veteran of the 101st Airborne Division, Robert Lorbeer, wrote a letter to the editor to

American soldier who died or is still unaccounted for during the Vietnam War. For more information please visit: <http://www.vvmf.org/FAQs>

express his concerns about the design. He complained, “Now we are going to have a Vietnam Veterans Memorial that does not even identify where or in what war the men and women served and died. That’s recognition?”³⁰ Lorbeer continued by insisting that he wanted the memorial to serve as a tribute to not only those who died, but also to those who returned and were still living.

Tom Carhart, a Vietnam veteran of the 101st Airborne Division, mirrored Lorbeer’s concern. Carhart claimed the memorial’s design did not represent all who served in Vietnam because the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund had not selected a Vietnam veteran to serve as a juror for the competition.³¹ He argued that the jury selected a design that violated a critical component of the competition guidelines. A requirement of the design competition was that the memorial could not make a political statement about the Vietnam War. Carhart believed that Lin’s design makes a political statement about the sorrow that the war caused. He declared,

I am a combat Vietnam veteran with two Purple Hearts and *I* feel no sorrow. I regret the deaths of brothers in arms, but they died noble, principled deaths, and I salute them and honor them. I am *proud* of our service to America, not sorry for it. Should the jury, made up of men who never served in Vietnam, tell Vietnam veterans and the nation how to feel and how we will be remembered in history?³²

Carhart concluded with recommendations for making the memorial’s design more reflective of those who served in Vietnam. These suggestions included changing the black granite to white, raising the memorial above ground, and adding the United States

³⁰ Robert Lorbeer, “Inadequate Memorial,” *The Washington Post*, May 16, 1981.

³¹ Tom Carhart, “A Better Way to Honor Viet Vets,” *The Washington Post*, November 15, 1981.

³² *Ibid.*

flag to the memorial.³³ Other Vietnam veterans felt that something about Lin's design needed to be changed or added to reflect and honor the Vietnam veterans who were still living.

Others also expressed grievances about the winning design, claiming that the memorial brought shame and grief to those who served in Vietnam. They argued the memorial resembled a large "black gash" that reflected the conflicts that erupted during the antiwar protests in the 1960s and 1970s. Patricia L. Walsh served as a Registered Nurse in Vietnam. In a letter to the editor, she asserted that Lin's design was repugnant because "it represents the black gash that ripped our country apart in dissent, and the black memories of what I saw over there waiting for me to close my eyes so they could come back to haunt me."³⁴ Walsh was not alone. Texas millionaire, H. Ross Perot, who provided the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund with \$160,000 for the design competition, objected to Lin's design. Perot said the design was a "'slap in the face' of those who served in the war."³⁵ Perot continued to express his concern's with Maya Lin's design, claiming that he talked to thousands of Vietnam veterans and found few who

³³ The following week, Jan Scruggs in a letter to the editor corrected the inaccuracies of Tom Carhart's article. Scruggs defended the memorial by stating that three of the jurors were combat veterans; he never directly stated they served in the Vietnam War. However, nowhere in his book, *To Heal a Nation*, or any other newspaper article are the jury members credited as being combat veterans. Carhart was not the only person to complain about the lack of Vietnam veterans on the jury panel. Scruggs continued by asserting that a panel of Vietnam veterans unanimously approved the design. Refer to: Jan C. Scruggs, "The Vietnam Memorial: 'Eloquent' or 'Repugnant'?", *The Washington Post*, November 24, 1981.

³⁴ Patricia L. Walsh, "The Vietnam Memorial: 'Eloquent' or 'Repugnant'?", *The Washington Post*, November 24, 1981.

³⁵ "Most Ex-POWs Polled Dislike Vietnam War Memorial Design," *The Washington Post*, October 12, 1982.

liked the design. As a result of his dissatisfaction of the competition's results, Perot threaten to pay to have a Gallup Poll conducted, which would survey the American public's reaction to the memorial's design. Initially, Scruggs encouraged Perot to conduct his poll because he claimed that under no circumstance would there be a new memorial design.³⁶

On the other hand, only a select few staff writers of the main news publications, such as the *New York Times*, *Albuquerque Tribune* and *Washington Star*, praised Maya Lin's winning design. Those who provided positive commentary on the design typically addressed how Lin's design appropriately captured the goal of rehabilitating a nation torn apart by the war. In an article for the *New York Times*, Paul Goldberger disagreed with the Vietnam veterans. He argued that Lin's design did not dishonor the men and women who served in Vietnam. Rather, he claimed, "its extreme dignity and restraint honors these veterans with more poignancy, surely, than most more conventional monuments."³⁷

A large amount of opposition from the American public on Lin's design alarmed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. They worried that if they could not persuade the American public, specifically Vietnam veterans, to understand and appreciate the chosen design, it would never be built. On January 27, 1982, Jan Scruggs and representatives of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund met with Ross Perot and a group of ex-POW officers to discuss the controversy surrounding Lin's design.³⁸ After hours of quarrelling,

³⁶ Robert W. Doubek, *Creating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: The Inside Story* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015), 178.

³⁷ Paul Goldberger, "Vietnam War Memorial to Capture Anguish of a Decade of Doubt: An Appraisal on the Mall in Washington," *The New York Times*, June 6, 1981.

they finally reached a compromise. Perot agreed not to conduct his Gallup Poll, if the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund decided to add a flagpole and statue to Lin's original design. Ultimately, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund agreed to the addition of a statue element to the design, improved the inscription on the memorial, and added a flag pole. They planned to select a statue from the entries that had been submitted for the competition. Later in 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund approved Frederick Hart's statue, *Three Soldiers*.³⁹

The compromise caused the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to alter the proposal they had submitted earlier to the National Capital Planning Commission and the Fine Arts Commission. Due to the alteration, Interior Secretary James Watt refused to provide the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund with a building permit until both organizations had approved the addition of a statue and flag. Watt proclaimed in a letter to the chairman of the Fine Arts Commission, "I am not prepared to act ... without assurances that the design improvements meets the approval of the commission."⁴⁰ It was not until March 11th, nearly two weeks after the hoped-for goal, that Watt provided the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund with the necessary permit to begin construction on

³⁸ Scruggs and Swerdlow misprinted the date of the meeting in their book, *To Heal a Nation*, by stating the meeting took place on January 27, 1981. This meeting could not have taken place in January of 1981 because the winning design was not announced until April of 1981. In a special for the *Washington Post*, Tom Wolfe states the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and Perot came to a compromise during a meeting in early 1982. Refer to: Tom Wolfe, "Art Disputes War: The Battle of the Vietnam Memorial: How the Mullahs of Modernism Caused a Stir Vietnam Memorial How It Went Awry," *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1982. Scruggs and Swerdlow, *To Heal a Nation*, 99.

³⁹ Doubek, *Creating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, 217.

⁴⁰ Benjamin Forgey, "Memorial Delayed: Vietnam Monument to Be Reviewed Memorial," *The Washington Post*, February 27, 1982.

their monument.⁴¹ Another two weeks later, on March 26th, they finally began construction on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's anxiety no longer focused on the controversial debates surrounding Lin's design, but rather whether their memorial would be completed in time to be dedicated on Veterans Day in 1982.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund worked around the clock to ensure that they reached their deadline of November 11th for the dedication of the memorial. They wanted the dedication ceremony to be the premier event of a weeklong tribute to Vietnam veterans. They called the week "National Salute to Vietnam Veterans," which would take place from November 10th-14th. Events included: a vigil service at the National Cathedral, reading of the 58,000 soldiers names on the memorial, concerts, workshops held by Vietnam Veterans of America, POW reception, open houses for Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion, and a parade down Constitution Avenue.⁴² Astonishingly after several long months of construction, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund finished the construction of the memorial just in time for their salute to Vietnam veterans.⁴³

Just as quickly as the commemorative festivities began, the American public voiced their thoughts about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. A majority believed the

⁴¹ Jean White, "Watt Okays a Memorial Plan: Site of Statue, Flagpole Still to Be Decided," *The Washington Post*, March 12, 1982.

⁴² Scruggs and Swerdlow, *To Heal a Nation*, 119.

⁴³ During the construction of the memorial, the general contractor was the Gilabane Building Company, a company based out of Providence, Rhode Island. They worked under the architectural firm of Cooper-Lecky Partnership, who supervised the project.

memorial was the greatest celebration the United States had provided to its Vietnam veterans. They claimed that the memorial dedication and parade served as the significant major sign of appreciation towards Vietnam veterans, allowing the nation to heal the wounds of war. A day before the dedication ceremonies, John Wheeler, chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, proclaimed in a *Washington Post* article that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund hoped the memorial would be seen as “the first step in a healing process.”⁴⁴ On the day of the dedication, General William Westmoreland observed, “I think this tribute is long overdue, of course, and it’s much appreciated by the vets.”⁴⁵ Mary McGrory, in her *Washington Post* article, argued that not just the Vietnam memorial assisted with the healing process for Vietnam veterans. She concluded that all the events during the weeklong tribute, especially the parade, provided veterans with a sense of healing about their service in Vietnam.⁴⁶ It seemed that those who typically voiced their support for the dedication and ceremony were Vietnam veterans and their family, and only because the memorial was the first national symbol of gratitude towards Vietnam veterans.

Within only a couple weeks of the memorial’s dedication, old concerns regarding veterans’ issues, like unemployment and Agent Orange, resurfaced. Some leaders of Vietnam veteran organizations believed the dedication served as an opportune time to

⁴⁴ Mary McGrory, “Vietnam Memorial Seen as ‘First Step in a Healing Process,’” *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1982.

⁴⁵ Joe Brown, “Saluting Vietnam Veterans,” *The Washington Post*, November 11, 1982.

⁴⁶ Mary McGrory, “It May Have Been the Best Idea Vietnam Veterans Ever Had,” *The Washington Post*, November 16, 1982.

readdress the unmet needs of veterans. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, Robert A. Ptachik, President of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Brooklyn Chapter, agreed the memorial was a source of pride for Vietnam veterans. He insisted, however, that “until the problems that prevented many of us from living full and productive lives are dealt with in a serious manner, it is premature to say that we have ‘come home’.”⁴⁷

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund received a variety of responses from the American public throughout every phase of the memorial’s creation, from its initial idea to its dedication ceremony. The issues surrounding the memorial divided the American public roughly in half. Citizens of the United States were just as divided about memorializing the Vietnam War as they had been about the presence of having American troops in Vietnam only ten years earlier. Even though the United States seemed evenly split on the issue of memorializing those who served their country in Vietnam, there were some clear trends on the contested opinions surrounding the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.

The first tendency in these letters to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and the editors of major news publications is that those who tended to support the memorial only vocalized their opinions during the idea conception stage in the late 1970s and again following the dedication ceremony in 1982. Very rarely did supporters of the memorial articulate their concerns during the political maneuvers to approve it. On the other hand, opposition to the memorial is evident throughout the entire memorialization process. Those who opposed the memorial’s design made their voices heard from conception to

⁴⁷ Robert A. Ptachik, “Vietnam Veterans Need More Than a Salute,” *The New York Times*, November 21, 1982.

construction, but seemingly their opposition disappeared following the dedication ceremony.

The reasoning behind either supporting or opposing the memorial tended to be very similar throughout a majority of the published voices. Those who supported the idea and creation of the memorial hoped the memorial would serve as the first significant national step towards healing a nation that was torn apart by the Vietnam War. Veterans and their families, predominantly comprised this population of supporters. Those who opposed the memorial, however, believed that the United States should be doing more to help the Vietnam Veterans who returned home from war with health and psychological issues, such as Agent Orange and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Administrators who worked with veteran affairs organizations tended to have this particular viewpoint of the memorial.

Lastly, Vietnam veterans tended to vocalize their opinions of the memorial the most throughout the entire process. Letters to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and major news publications proved that a majority of the Vietnam veterans favored the idea of dedicating a memorial to those who served in Vietnam. It was not until the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund released Maya Lin's winning design to the American public that veterans turned against the proposed memorial. The Vietnam veterans who articulated their concerns with Lin's design were inclined to believe that the winning design only memorialized those who died in Vietnam, and did not include a place for the living veterans to be commemorated. It was not until after the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund agreed to add the *Three Soldiers* statue that Vietnam veterans felt that they could call the memorial their own.

How Do Other Memorials Compare?

As Nahas outlined in his book, *Warriors to Remember*, the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. led to a massive spike in the number of memorials dedicated in the late 1980s. In 1985, the *New York Times* published an article by Ben A. Franklin that discussed the widespread attempts to memorialize and commemorate the Vietnam veterans throughout the United States. Franklin opened the article by quickly summarizing the events that had taken place on Veterans Day in Washington D.C. earlier that week. He continued by discussing the Vietnam veterans' memorials that had recently been dedicated or were scheduled for construction throughout the United States. Tennessee, New York, Florida, South Carolina, Oregon, and Texas were just a few of the select states scheduled to build a memorial to their Vietnam veterans. The article quoted Sam Bartholomew, a Vietnam veteran who headed up the fundraising efforts for a memorial in Nashville, Tennessee, proclaiming, ““These Vietnam memorials are beginning to pop up all over the country.””⁴⁸

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. was not unique in its struggles to memorialize the war that had torn the nation apart. Several other memorials all over the United States saw similar responses from the general public regarding the idea of constructing a memorial for the nation's Vietnam veterans. New York City experienced some debate surrounding their memorial. Just as with the memorial in Washington D.C., some citizens of New York City wished the memorial reflected the

⁴⁸ Ben A. Franklin, “Efforts to Honor Vietnam Veterans Spreading,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 1985.

Vietnam Era as a whole rather than just those who served in the war. James Reston Jr. proclaimed in a *New York Times* article, “New York should go beyond Washington’s achievement and put its mind into a broader, different statement.”⁴⁹ Reston concluded, “If there is to be a panorama for meditation on the nature of Vietnam let it encompass the whole national experience.”⁵⁰ Even though there was some opposition against the memorial in New York City, the city dedicated the memorial in honor of the tenth anniversary of the withdrawal of all American troops from Vietnam on May 7, 1985.

Maryland probably faced the largest amount of contested public opinion. Initially, the Maryland Vietnam Memorial Commission desired to construct a memorial on Baltimore’s Federal Hill for its Vietnam veterans, but after a two-month deadlock was forced to consider changing the location to Annapolis. Just as with the memorial in Washington D.C., a portion of the public was upset with the winning design of Maryland’s memorial. Unlike in the national memorial, the Vietnam veterans highly praised the chosen design. Rather the opposition came from residents and businesses that neighbored Baltimore’s Federal Hill. They protested the proposed location because they worried that the memorial would be “too grandiose” and “it would overwhelm the historic hilltop park that overlooks Baltimore’s Inner Harbor.”⁵¹ Many veterans of Maryland felt betrayed by Baltimore’s residents who opposed the memorial’s location. Larry Medoff, a member of the Last Patrol who helped raised funds for the proposed

⁴⁹ James Reston Jr., “A Wall Honoring Not Only Vietnam Veterans,” *The New York Times*, November 6, 1984.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ “Vietnam Memorial Fight Ends on Federal Hill: Protests Shifts Search for Site to Annapolis,” *The Washington Post*, October 29, 1987.

memorial, declared, ““Every Vietnam veteran I’ve been dealing with feels this is the place ... but a few residents are sending us into oblivion again.””⁵² Vietnam veteran, Edward T. Kreiner, mirrored Medoff by proclaiming, ““the requirements and the demands of the community are an absurdity and an insult.””⁵³

Not all Vietnam veterans approved the construction of more memorials for veterans of the Vietnam War. In regards to the controversy surrounding the location of Maryland’s memorial, some veterans attempted to encourage the state to use the funds to build a veterans’ center rather than another memorial. In a letter to the editor, Vietnam veteran John Ketwig pleaded, “Vietnam veterans don’t need another statue or another wall carved with names. Vietnam veterans need understanding, counseling, assistance and a sense of being part of the community. Three-and-a-half million dollars would build, equip and man a Veterans Outreach Center in Baltimore for many years. We need a living memorial, one that helps to rebuild shattered lives.”⁵⁴

Ultimately, the memorial became a losing battle for the Maryland Vietnam Memorial Commission. Because of the lack of support from the Annapolis government, the commission decided to attempt to relocate their memorial in Baltimore. After reluctantly agreeing to Middle Branch Park as the new location for the memorial, they quickly realized that the original winning design would not fit into the assigned location. The commission decided against hosting another competition. Instead, Paul Spreiregen,

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ John Ketwig, “Vietnam Veterans Don’t Need Another Statue,” *The Washington Post*, December 6, 1987.

who oversaw the original competition, crafted a design that the commission approved.⁵⁵

After many struggles, the commission dedicated the memorial on May 28, 1989.



Figure 3: Maryland Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Photograph of the Maryland Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Baltimore, Maryland, which was dedicated on May 28, 1989. Photograph taken on September 19, 2009 by Vietnam veteran Michael Walsh. Photograph courtesy of Michael Walsh, March 2016.

State and city governments appeared to have an easier time commemorating their Vietnam veterans through parades and meetings rather than physical memorials, monuments, and statues. On June 13, 1986, Chicago hosted a parade that honored its local Vietnam veterans bringing a total of roughly 700,000 participants and spectators, which was the largest gathering of Vietnam veterans since the war.⁵⁶ The city of Chicago dedicated a small monument and reflecting pool on the same day as the national

⁵⁵ Nahas, *Warriors Remembered*, 39.

⁵⁶ “Vietnam Veterans Celebrate Homecoming of Years Ago: ‘Public Has Changed,’ Westmoreland Says,” *The Washington Post*, June 14, 1986.

memorial in Washington D.C., but it was not until 2005 that Chicago built an entire plaza to its Vietnam veterans.

The Vietnam War was the longest and most controversial war in American history. The nation divided itself into “hawks” and “doves” over the political and military decision to have American troops fighting in Vietnam. It took nearly ten years after the withdrawal of all troops for Americans to dedicate a national monument to its veterans who fought and died in Vietnam. Even though the war was over, the American public did not hesitate to vocalize their support or opposition for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund’s national memorial. News publications, such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund received numerous amounts of letters from Vietnam veterans and the American public voicing their opinions of the memorial through. These vocalizations did not stop the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund from constructing their memorial, but they did delay and alter aspects of the memorial’s design. Even though the national memorial in Washington D.C. saw the largest amount of debate, Vietnam veteran memorials throughout the United States also received letters showing their support and opposition. The American public was just as divided on memorializing the Vietnam War, as they were on the war itself.

CHAPTER III

FROM MEMORIALS TO INTERPRETATION: THE PRESERVATION AND EDUCATION OF THE VIETNAM ERA FROM THE 1990S TO THE PRESENT

After the wave of memorialization in the 1980s, the next step for the public representations of the Vietnam War was the creation of more inclusive interpretations to educate the public on the era by establishing museums. This chapter opens by examining the current education standards for the United States' high school students regarding the Vietnam Era, and how some classroom teachers are utilizing Vietnam veterans to provide their students with first-person accounts of the Vietnam War. Then the chapter provides a narrative account describing the establishment of the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum in Ruckersville, Virginia, which was the first museum opened in the United States dedicated to the interpretation of the Vietnam Era. Following the creation story of the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum, the chapter ends by highlighting three museums that are currently in the process of gathering funds to establish their version of a Vietnam Era museum.

The Vietnam Era remained a taboo discussion topic in American culture well into the 1980s and 1990s, especially in the high school classroom. According to an article published in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1985, the number of college seminar courses discussing the Vietnam War had increased dramatically over the last three years, but the average high school student was not being taught any historical events beyond World War II in their American history courses.¹ In 1982, Jerold Starr, director of the Center for

¹ Michael Arndt, "America Comes to Terms with Vietnam War—in Classroom," *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1985, accessed August 22, 2015, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-11-24/news/8503210308_1_vietnam-veterans-memorial-fund-south-vietnam-vietnam-experience.

Social Studies Education in Pittsburgh, Pa., conducted a survey of history textbooks revealing that the average American history textbook dedicated only three paragraphs to the Vietnam War, which tended to glorify America's role and avoid the surrounding controversies.² More than ten years later, the *Los Angeles Times* printed an article that addressed the same issue. Ronny Newman, a history high school teacher at Laguna Beach High School, argued that one factor for the lack of discussion on the Vietnam Era in the classroom was because "teachers were afraid to talk about it."³

Even today, more than fifty years after the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, the Vietnam Era is a commonly ignored discussion topic in the average public high school history classroom. As a graduate teaching assistant at Middle Tennessee State University, this author provided several lectures that examined the role of the media and popular culture on the Vietnam Era. At the beginning of each lecture, students were asked if their high school teachers covered the Vietnam War in their American history class. In a seminar course of roughly 150 students, less than 10% said their teacher addressed the Vietnam War.⁴ Even those who had heard of the Vietnam War did not know major events such as the My Lai Massacre, Tet Offensive, or the Kent State shooting. Based on the National

² Diane Seo, "Getting Vietnam War Into Classrooms Is Still a Battle: 20 Years After the Fall: How the Vietnam War Is Taught in O.C. Schools," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1995, accessed August 22, 2015, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-05-01/news/mn-61018_1_vietnam-war.

³ Ibid.

⁴ This statistic is based on a United States History from 1865 to the Present seminar, where I served as a graduate teaching assistant. During a lecture that I presented on Vietnam & Public Memory, I questioned students about their previous teaching on the Vietnam War and their current knowledge of major events during the era.

History Standards for American history public high school courses across the United States, this statistic is not surprising.

According to a study released by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2015, Maryland's public high schools ranked highest in performance on their state assessments and college readiness scores.⁵ Even though Maryland appears to be leading the way in public education, they are dedicating just above average time to the Vietnam Era. Currently, Maryland has only two curriculum standards that even address the social, political, and cultural events surrounding the Vietnam Era. These curriculum standards aim for the students to “demonstrate an understanding of the cultural, economic, political, social and technological developments” from 1946 through 1980 by examining major events such as the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Tet Offensive, invasions of Cambodia and Laos, and the withdrawal of United States' forces from Vietnam.⁶ Surprisingly, Maryland is still using the same curriculum standards for United States history that the Maryland State Department of Education published in February 2006. The same study released by the *U.S. News* ranked North Dakota and Mississippi as two of the worst performing public

⁵ Travis Mitchell, “Top-Performing States in the Best High School Rankings,” *U.S. News & World Report*, May 11, 2015, accessed August 22, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/articles/2015/05/11/map-top-performing-states-in-the-best-high-schools-rankings>.

⁶ “Using the State Curriculum Standards: US History, High School,” School Improvement in Maryland, last modified February 27, 2006, accessed August 22, 2015, http://mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/assessments/hsvsc/us_history.html.

high schools in the United States. Currently, both North Dakota and Mississippi's state curriculum standards for American history do not even address the Vietnam Era.⁷

The Vietnam Era more than merely a controversial time in America's history that teachers are afraid to discuss; some educators struggle to fit the Vietnam Era into their curriculum due to a personal disconnect that they have with the war. As a result, over the last few decades, some educators have been turning to Vietnam veterans to establish a personal connection between the students and the Vietnam Era. Throughout the past twenty years, Vietnam veterans across the country have been entering high school classrooms and college seminars to discuss not only their military experiences in Vietnam, but also the political atmosphere of the 1970s.⁸ Certain educators believe the best way to teach the Vietnam Era is by bringing a Vietnam veteran into the classroom, so that students can learn directly from personal experiences. Lynn Backus is one of these teachers.

During the mid-1990s, Lynn Backus taught American history to high school students at Deer Park High School in Long Island, New York. Instead of attempting to discuss the political and social impacts of the Vietnam War, she invited her cousin,

⁷ Currently, the State of North Dakota does not have any published curriculum standards in regards to United States history. Some schools in North Dakota have adopted curriculum standards outlined by Perma-Bound, which has only developed curriculum standards for kindergarten through eight grade. "2011 Mississippi Social Studies Framework," Mississippi Department of Education, last modified 2011, accessed August 22, 2015, <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/curriculum-and-instructions-library/2011-mississippi-social-studies-framework.pdf?sfvrsn=4>.

⁸ Janie Blankenship, "Busting Myths About the Vietnam War One Classroom at a Time," *Veterans of Foreign Wars*, September 2014, 24-33, accessed August 27, 2015, <https://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/19f1851f-9c3f-4ecd-832b-feaa21920f63/Teaching-Vietnam.aspx>.

retired Sergeant First Class Craig LaMountain, to discuss his personal experiences and memories of the Vietnam War.⁹ The United States Army drafted him in 1967, and he served south of Dang Nang in Tam Kay from August 1967 until August 1968.

LaMountain's goal of these classroom presentations was to provide the students with a depiction of the everyday activities of a soldier serving in Vietnam.¹⁰ He accomplished this goal by bringing small memorabilia and artifacts from the Vietnam War into the classroom to accompany his slideshow of photographs. Backus video recorded his presentation and distributed it to other teachers in the Long Island area, which led to LaMountain providing classroom presentations across the city. As a result of these presentations, he found a passion for educating the general public, especially students, on the Vietnam Era. This passion ran so deeply that it would ultimately lead to the establishment of a museum dedicated entirely to the preservation and education of the Vietnam Era.

After retiring LaMountain moved from Long Island to Ruckersville, Virginia he continued his passion for educating the public by bringing restored military vehicles and artifacts to schools, fairs, and special events across Greene County in Virginia. As he continued to acquire memorabilia through donations and purchases, he began storing them in a large tractor-trailer shed on his property. In 2009, he partnered with retired Lieutenant Colonel Owen R. "Dick" Thompson to incorporate their collections into the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum. Following the incorporation of the museum, LaMountain spent his efforts expanding the museum's existing displays and equipment.

⁹ Craig LaMountain, e-mail message to author, August 28-29, 2015.

¹⁰ Craig LaMountain, interview by author, Ruckersville, Virginia, May 24, 2015.

After the completion of the museum's main exhibit space, the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum invited schools across Greene County to visit the museum instead of sending Vietnam veterans into the classroom. Co-founder Dick Thompson argued this worked better for the museum because many of the artifacts were too large to bring into a classroom, and by having the schools visit the museum they were able to cover a wider variety of experiences during the Vietnam Era.¹¹

The State of Virginia only has one standard in their curriculum for American history that directly refers to the Vietnam War. The standard reads "the student will demonstrate knowledge of the economic, social, and political transformation of the United States and the world between the end of World War II and the present by identifying the role of American's military and veterans in defending freedom during the Cold War, including the wars in Korea and Vietnam, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the collapse of communism in Europe, and the rise of new challenges."¹² Since the opening of the museum in 2009, only homeschool organizations and private schools have been visiting the museum. The museum has been reaching out to public schools for several years, but with little success. However, on May 27, 2015, Charlottesville High School

¹¹ Owen R. "Dick" Thompson, e-mail to author, August 25, 2015.

¹² "History and Social Science Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools," Virginia Department of Education, last modified January 2008, accessed September 5, 2015, http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/history_socialscience/next_version/stds_ushistory_1865-present.pdf.

visited the museum, which made them the first public school to visit the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum.¹³

Matthew Deegan teaches tenth grade World History at Charlottesville High School in Virginia, and he is the first public school teacher to bring students to the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum. His inspiration to visit the museum spurred from a project that he assigned to his class after they completed their standardized tests. The goal of the project was to connect his students to the local veterans who had served from World War II through the present by having the students interview the veterans about their experiences. During their visit to the museum, students were provided with the opportunity to interview Vietnam veterans from the local area. Deegan would love the project to expand and incorporate other teachers from the high school, but he believes that other teachers will be hesitant to get involved in a project of this nature due to what he refers to as “standard culture.”¹⁴ According to Deegan, standard culture is being afraid or not knowing how to think outside of the educational box that curriculum standards have created for public educators. Although Deegan is unsure if other teachers will join him in the project, he plans to continue the project next school year because he feels that the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum provided his students with a real connection to the past.

¹³ Vietnam War Foundation, Facebook post, May 27, 2015, accessed September 5, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/137470479662673/photos/pb.137470479662673.-2207520000.1441479229./864262163650164/?type=3&theater>.

¹⁴ Matthew Deegan, phone interview with author, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, September 9, 2015.

The Vietnam War Foundation & Museum is entirely operated by Vietnam veterans, who provide all museum visitors with a guided exploration through the daily life of a soldier serving in Vietnam. While the veterans try to remain non-political about the Vietnam War, they do make it a task to provide their visitors with a fuller picture of the United States during the 1960s and 1970s by focusing on aspects of American life during the Vietnam Era. The tour begins outside beside a colorfully painted 1960s Volkswagen Bus that is surrounded by picket signs protesting the war. At this exhibit, the veterans discuss the events involved in the anti-war movement by referencing the historical newspaper articles that are located inside of the van. Visitors are led inside to a small room that is decorated with artifacts depicting American life in the late 1960s and manikins wearing military uniforms from the Vietnam War. Since the central focus of the museum's exhibits are the experiences of soldiers while serving in Vietnam, very little time and resources is dedicated to civilian life and the political atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States.

The veterans guide their visitors into the large metal shed, which houses a vast majority of the museum's collections. By the entryway between the small foyer area in the front and the main exhibit space, there is a small wall lined with historic photographs of the veterans who volunteer their time at the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum. Across from this wall is a table full of memorabilia that veterans have donated to the museum, such as small handguns, letters, and photographs. Also, on this table is a book containing nothing but draft letters. Here the veterans explain that roughly 25% of those who served in Vietnam were drafted, and how this related back to the anti-war demonstrations discussed at the Volkswagen Bus. The veterans use the draft letters as

their entry way to discussing and focusing on the experiences of a soldier during the Vietnam War. Just a few steps ahead of the table is a static display depicting the average sleeping arrangements during boot camp. Inside of the display is a metal bunk bed and a footlocker containing clothes, boots, and hygiene items. On top of the bed is a military uniform and books about the Vietnam War. This is the only display in the museum that discusses aspects of soldiers' lives while still in the United States.

Within just steps of this display, the visitors are transported across the Pacific Ocean as the veterans transition from discussing daily life during boot camp to the daily activities that occurred on the battlefields of Vietnam. Many of the static displays that make up this section of the museum's interpretive plan are based on historic photographs provided by Vietnam veterans that volunteer at the museum. The first two displays portray a mess hall and a nurse's station. The mess hall not only illustrates the typical diet of an American soldier in Vietnam, but also the preparation methods of the food. The mess hall display is based on a photograph provided by retired Sergeant William "Bill" Fields, who served in Vietnam as a cook for the Army, and the nurse's station is based on the memories of one of the volunteers who served as a nurse in the combat zones of Vietnam. If the veteran that the display is based on is volunteering at the museum during the tour, the guide will usually pull them onto the tour to share their personal experiences with the visitors, because they feel as if it furthers their mission to provide their visitors "the opportunity to hear its veterans share their stories and see its military legacy in a unique 'hands-on' environment."¹⁵

¹⁵ "About VWF," Vietnam War Foundation & Museum, last modified 2009, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.vietnamwarfoundation.org/aboutus.htm>.



Figure 4: Replica of Mess Hall in Vietnam Battlefields

Retired Sergeant Bill Fields, Vietnam veteran, provides a demonstration to visitors to explain the process of cooking and eating food in the combat zones of Vietnam.

Photograph courtesy of the author, May 2014.

A majority of the exhibition space is dedicated to depicting different aspects of the combat zone in Vietnam. This section is full of professionally restored military vehicles and life-like manikins dressed in historically appropriate military uniforms. As in the exhibit space before, the displays are based on historic photographs that were donated by the Vietnam veterans who volunteer at the museum. The museum staff uses these displays to attempt to explain the different characteristics that are involved in the combat zones of war. A restored 1964 UH-1D/H Huey (helicopter) stands along one of the sidewalls in the back of the museum. Beside the Huey is a manikin wearing a U.S. Army flight suit. Pinned to the flight suit is a historic photograph of Dick Thompson, who flew Hueys in Vietnam during two different tours of duty, once in Con Tho from February 1967 to February 1968 and again in Qui Nhon from March 1969 until March

1970. The static display is a near replica of the photograph. Another display contains a restored M815A3 (radio van). Visitors are encouraged to climb into the vehicle, which is fully decorated with military artifacts to recreate the scene. On the exterior backside of the radio van are several historic photographs depicting soldiers at work inside of this type of vehicle. This exhibit space also contains the following restored military vehicles: M151A1 (jeep), M35A (troop transporter), M274 (mule), and a 1964 M37B1 (pick-up truck). While the vehicles serve as the main backdrop for each of these displays, they are fully equipped with military equipment and uniforms to provide the visitor with a fuller understanding beyond the quick snapshots of the combat zones in Vietnam. The walls behind each of the displays contain a hand painted landscape of the combat zones, which were painted by Vietnam veteran Allen Shotwell and his daughter.



Figure 5: Interior View of Vietnam War Foundation & Museum

Interior view of the exhibit space at the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum in Ruckersville, Virginia. Photograph courtesy of the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum, August 2015.

In another section of the main exhibit space, the museum has dedicated a display case to the discussion of the troops who served in the North Vietnamese Army and for the Viet Cong. Inside of the display case is a series of weapons, mostly firearms, used by the North Vietnamese Army. On each side of the display case is a small table that contains equipment, tools, and uniforms used by either the North Vietnamese Army or the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War. The veterans utilize this space to attempt to provide the visitors with multiple perspectives of the Vietnam War by addressing not only the American interpretation of the war. During the museum's major open house events each year, they have live weapon demonstrations that portray not only U.S. military weapons, but also those used by the Viet Cong. In addition to the display case and two tables, there is a small bamboo cage that contains a U.S. Army uniform and a small, worn American flag to depict the treatment of American prisoners of war by the North Vietnamese Army. The interpretive goal is to portray how American prisoners of war were treated and transported to prisons, such as Hao Lo (Hanoi Hilton) in Vietnam.¹⁶ The bamboo cage is actually known as a Tiger Cage because it was the same cages that the Vietnamese used to transport wild tigers that had been captured in the jungle. While this small space dedicated to the North Vietnamese interpretation of the Vietnam War barely scratches the surface, the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum is one of the few museums in the United States that discusses the Vietnamese perspective in the exhibits of the Vietnam War.

¹⁶ Owen R. "Dick" Thompson, e-mail to author, October 4, 2015.

While the primary mission of the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum is to provide “the general public the opportunity to hear its veterans share their stories and see its military legacy,” the museum has additionally become a center of healing for many veterans.¹⁷ The last major space within the museum’s exhibit space is a series of display cases dedicated to the veterans who have served on behalf of the United States from World War I to the current wars in the Middle East. Some of the Vietnam veterans who visit the museum suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, and they struggle with some of the exhibits displayed in the museum. However, in some cases, veterans begin to open up about their experiences in Vietnam and allow the healing process to begin. Dick Thompson believes that the healing process that takes place in the museum is an offshoot from the primary focus of education, but he understands that it occurs and wants to continue to build a positive environment that encourages the healing process for Vietnam veterans and their families.¹⁸

The museum is able to achieve a mission of both education and healing through a process that historian Alison Landsburg coined as “prosthetic memory.” Landsburg argues “the technologies of mass culture and the capitalist economy of which they are a part open up a world of images outside a person’s lived experience, creating a portable,

¹⁷ “About VWF,” Vietnam War Foundation & Museum, last modified 2009, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://www.vietnamwarfoundation.org/aboutus.htm>.

¹⁸ Owen R. “Dick” Thompson, interview by author, Ruckersville, Virginia, May 24, 2015.

fluid, and nonessentialist form of memory.”¹⁹ Landsburg categorizes museums as a type of mass culture that can stimulate their visitors into developing memories of historical events in which they were not direct participants; she refers to these museums as experimental museums. She uses the permanent exhibit at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as her case study to demonstrate how an experimental museum can develop a prosthetic memory. She asserts that the entire interpretive design of the museum is intended to be an experience for the visitors, but that means that the visitors never directly experienced the Holocaust. She proclaims, “that rather, they have an experience that positions their bodies to be better able to understand an otherwise unthinkable event.”²⁰

In their own way, this is exactly what the veterans are doing for their visitors at the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum. While the visitors at the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum do not assume the identity of any of the service personnel who served in Vietnam, historical objects that they can interact with and first-person narratives of those who served in the Vietnam War surround the visitor. This history museum differs from most other similar museums and historic houses that use first-person narrative, because those who are providing the tour at the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum are not simply reciting a script about a character in history; they are telling stories about their own experiences during the Vietnam Era. According to Dick

¹⁹ Alison Landsburg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 18.

²⁰ Landsburg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 131.

Thompson, they knew they wanted to educate the public about Vietnam and soldier's experience in Vietnam, but it was not until later that they realized they were an experimental museum. He declared, "We are not just a museum. We are a Vietnam experience, and that kind of exemplifies the whole operating mode of the museum."²¹

This experimental mode not only works as an educational tool for the general public, who did not serve in Vietnam, but also for the veterans that did. By recreating snapshots of American service in the battlefields of Vietnam, veterans get a sense of familiarity that allows them to open up about their experience in Vietnam that often leads to a feeling of healing. Thompson believes the Vietnam veterans visiting the museum "walk away with a little remembrance of what it was like," and they begin to "actually open up" with their families.²²

This type of experimental museum will not be able to continue for much longer at the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum. Roughly only 30% of those who served in Vietnam still alive, and the average age for a Vietnam veteran in 2015 is between 67 and 72. The Board of Directors of the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum is composed of six people, all of whom are either Vietnam veterans or wives of the veterans. Of these six board members, three of them are battling terminal cancer; including its founder, Craig LaMountain.²³ The founders and board members understand that how their museum

²¹ Thompson, interview.

²² Thompson, interview.

²³ Ibid.

operates today will not be able to continue in the future, and within the last year they have started developing future plans for the museum.

The top priority for these veterans in regards to preserving their museum is relocating it, since the museum currently is located on LaMountain's private property. Idealistically, the group of veterans would love to have the museum stay within Greene County, Virginia, but thus far they have not been able to secure a local location. The post commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7638 agreed to set aside two or three acres behind the post in their large, open field.²⁴ VFW Post 7638 is located on Highway 231 (Gordon Avenue) in Gordonsville, Virginia. At this site, the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum intends to build their Vietnam Era collection a permanent home. They envision the museum being a 75'x150' building that has a two-story entrance, and the main exhibit space having 20' vaulted ceilings, which provides them with four times the amount of exhibition space they currently have. In the museum's current exhibit space, all of the displays are placed tightly on top of one another, which cuts into the interpretive impact of each display. They hope to not only extend the amount of space dedicated to each display, but also to include new ones as well. They hope to add an entire section of the museum that replicates a Vietnamese village during the Vietnam War. Allen Shotwell, a Vietnam veteran who volunteers at the museum, has already constructed a 1/48 scale diorama of a Vietnamese village from his memories of serving in Vietnam.²⁵ They intend to use this diorama as a model for their larger Vietnamese village

²⁴ Ibid.

display. Overall, the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum is looking at a budget of roughly \$1.5 million to complete the process of constructing and opening the museum at its future location in Gordonsville, Virginia.



Figure 6: Vietnamese Village Diorama

Vietnam veteran, Allen Shotwell constructed this 1/48 scale diorama of a Vietnamese village for the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum based on his memories of serving in the Vietnam War in 1967. Photograph courtesy of the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum, August 2015.

The Vietnam War Foundation & Museum is also making plans to have a paid staff operate the museum at the new location. The Vietnam veterans will no longer be responsible for the continuous maintenance of the museum facility and all of its collections, but they would be responsible for continuing to share their experiences with the public.²⁶ LaMountain fears the museum will lose its experimental design when it leaves its location in Ruckersville, because it will become less of an interactive

²⁵ Vietnam War Foundation, Facebook post, August 22, 2015, accessed September 5, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Vietnam-War-Foundation/137470479662673?sk=timeline>.

²⁶ Thompson, interview.

museum.²⁷ Based on the museum's current plans, it is unclear what the museum intends to do regarding educational programming once there are no Vietnam veterans left to volunteer at the museum.

As their mission currently stands, the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum is dedicated to ensuring that each of their guests walk away from the museums hearing accounts of the Vietnam War from real people who served in the war. According to the museum standards and best practices outlined by the American Alliance of Museums, "all aspects of the museum's operations are integrated and focused on meeting its mission."²⁸ Presently, the museum can fulfill their mission in accordance with the American Alliance of Museums' standards, but they have not developed a sustainability plan for the museum. Within the next fifteen years, most Vietnam veterans will be deceased, and there will no longer be people to deliver first-hand accounts of the events that took place during the Vietnam War. Due to the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum's unique mission and approach, it would be in their best interest to develop an action plan that outlines future interpretive goals and how they will be achieved by employees or volunteers other than Vietnam veterans. A possible solution to keeping the first person accounts in the hands-on environment would be to have docents trained to present the history discussed at the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum in first-person, such as the interpretive design of the famous Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia.

²⁷ LaMountain, interview.

²⁸ American Association of Museums, *National Standards & Best Practices for U.S. Museums* (Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2008), 34-36.

While the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum was the first museum opened in the United States that is dedicated to the preservation of the Vietnam Era, in light of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, several organizations have begun to gather funding to build a museum that interprets the history of the Vietnam Era. The following are up and coming museums dedicated to the Vietnam Era: the National Vietnam War Museum in Weatherford, Texas, the Vietnam War Museum of America in Garden Grove, California, and the Education Center at the Wall for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to accompany their memorial in Washington D.C. In many ways these new museums will share characteristics with the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum in Virginia, but yet each of these museums will have something unique and different to offer the public in regards to interpreting the Vietnam Era.

As it stands today, the National Vietnam War Museum in Weatherford, Texas contains a small visitor's center, which is a doublewide trailer that houses Vietnam Era artifacts and hosts traveling exhibits. The visitor's center is located on twelve acres and is surrounded by several memorial gardens; each of the gardens provides the visitors with the opportunity to reflect on the Vietnam Era. Once the construction of the main museum is complete, the gardens will supplement the museum's core idea and mission, which is "to promote an understanding of the Vietnam Era, while honoring those who served."²⁹ A 300' replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. is located in one of the gardens. Just like the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum in Virginia, the

²⁹ "About the National Vietnam War Museum," The National Vietnam War Museum, last updated 2015, accessed September 5, 2015, <http://www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org/the-museum-today.html>.

National Vietnam War Museum is operated entirely by volunteers, 75% of which are Vietnam veterans.³⁰

While the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum encourages an understanding of the Vietnam Era as a whole, they are primarily focused on the everyday experiences of those who served in the battlefields of Vietnam. On the other hand, the focus of the National Vietnam War Museum addresses a complete understanding of the political atmosphere during the Vietnam Era, while still honoring those who served. They aim to accomplish this mission by designing the museum “to tell the unbiased story of the more than 5 million servicemen and women who served there; the civilian contractors who supported their efforts; the Vietnamese people, their culture and history; and those on the home front, both those who supported and those who protested the war.”³¹ The founders of this museum have decided to categorize their historical narrative into the following interpretive themes: 1) the Cold War, 2) the nation and culture of Vietnam, 3) Vietnam War chronology, 4) an evolution of ground, sea, and air warfare, 5) the home front, 6) technology and the war, 7) the war’s end and aftermath, and 8) Fort Wolters.³² Thus far the founders have not broken ground on construction of the museum, but have met with an architectural group to design the building’s structure and Southwest Museum Services

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ “About the National Vietnam War Museum,” The National Vietnam War Museum, last updated 2015, accessed September 5, 2015, <http://www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org/the-museum-today.html>.

³² “Museum Themes,” The National Vietnam War Museum, last updated 2015, accessed September 5, 2015, <http://www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org/development-plan/museum-themes.html>.

for the placement of the exhibits. Unlike the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum, the National Vietnam War Museum is a self-guided exploration of the museum's exhibits and displays. For photographs of the museum's current layout of the exterior and interior exhibits and professional renderings of future plans, please refer to Appendix B.

The next upcoming museum is the Vietnam War Museum of America that will be located in Garden Grove, California, which is home to thousands of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants that came to the United States following the fall of Saigon in 1975. Like both the museum in Virginia and Texas, the Vietnam War Museum of America hopes to educate the general public on the complex time in American history known as the Vietnam Era. The mission of the Vietnam War Museum of America is "to educate and promote understanding of the Vietnam War, a misunderstood war in a misunderstood time."³³ Not only does the Vietnam War Museum of America Foundation want to the museum to educate the public on a misunderstood time in the United State's history, but they also want the museum to serve as a place that thanks and glorifies those who served in the Vietnam War. They hope to accomplish this by designing the museum so that it becomes a center of forgiveness and healing. However, unlike museums in Virginia and Texas, the Vietnam War Museum of America is not currently providing any interpretation of the Vietnam Era. In 2011, the city of Garden Grove purchased a building for the Vietnam War Museum of America Foundation, which would serve as the permanent home of he museum's exhibits and collections. Until the museum is officially in operation, Garden Grove is assuming the operational costs of the building. Currently,

³³ Garden Grove TV3, "Vietnam War Museum of America Foundation" (video), posted September 17, 2013, accessed September 5, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sN_39RsyoBM.

the Vietnam War Museum of America Foundation is still in the process of gathering the \$22 million necessary to complete the museum's proposed exhibits and designs.

Once the necessary funds are raised, the Vietnam War Museum of America Foundation plans to implement several exhibits that discuss the roles that both American and South Vietnamese troops had during the Vietnam War. Due to its unique location in southern California, they hope to build a replica of the entrance to the Citadel in Hue, Vietnam, to serve as their main entrance to the museum. On top of the museum will be a helicopter, whose blades are in a constant slow rotation to represent the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. Throughout the museum will be televisions of a variety of sizes broadcasting the news about Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s, since the media served as an influencing factor on the public opinion of the Vietnam War in the United States. The Vietnam War Museum of America Foundation plans to develop an interpretive narrative that discusses the events that led to the Vietnam War, the challenges of guerilla warfare, and the changes that occurred on the American home front due to the war.³⁴ Like the National Vietnam War Museum in Texas, the visitors will travel through the exhibits in a self-guided exploration.

Unfortunately, the Vietnam War Museum of American Foundation has collected just over 0.2% of the \$22 million funds needed to build their proposed museum plan since 2010. In early June of 2015, the city of Garden Grove, who purchased the \$2.46 million property to the foundation held a meeting, led by councilman Phat Bui, to discuss

³⁴ Garden Grove TV3, "Vietnam War Museum of America Foundation" (video).

pulling its building and funding from the project.³⁵ On September 11, 2015, Garden Grove announced that they were not only pulling all of their funding from the museum project, but would also be selling the building with they had purchased for the Vietnam War Museum of America Foundation in 2011 due to the lack of fundraising efforts by the museum's foundation and debt facing the city. Councilmen Kris Beard and Chris Phan, who served on the subcommittee that made the decision to withdraw the city's funding, encouraged the foundation to "expand the board to get more community support and mandate each member to pay a \$5,000 annual fee, get more Vietnamese-Americans on the board, raise enough money in the next couple years to hire an executive director, and to create a capital campaign to help finance the museum," which could lead to the city entertaining a request for financial assistance in the future.³⁶ There as been no official statement from the Vietnam War Museum of America Foundation president Peter Katz on the future of the museum.

Lastly is the Education Center at the Wall, which would be in Washington D.C. located near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, which dedicated the memorial in 1982, is now trying to expand their mission from a wall that heals to a wall that educates. According to Jan C. Scruggs, founder of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, a majority of those who visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

³⁵ Thy Vo, "Garden Grove Could Abandon Vietnam War Museum," *Voice of Orange County*, June 3, 2015, accessed September 6, 2015, <http://voiceofoc.org/2015/06/garden-grove-could-abandon-vietnam-war-museum/>.

³⁶ Chris Haire, "Vietnam War Museum Loses Financial Support of Garden Grove," *Orange County Register*, September 11, 2015, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/museum-681983-city-foundation.html>.

actually know very little about the Vietnam War.³⁷ The mission of the Education Center at the Wall will be not only to educate the future generations about the Vietnam War, but also to “honor America’s Legacy of Service, including those serving in our nation’s Armed Forces today.”³⁸ While each of the museums already discussed intend to honor those who served in Vietnam, the honor for Vietnam veterans will be a central focus for the Education Center at the Wall. Inside the center will be a massive digital wall that tells the stories of sacrifice for each individual name that is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Another exhibit will be a large display to showcase a portion of the artifacts that have been left at the memorial since its dedication in 1982. A section of the center will pay a special tribute to the veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Scruggs wants this center to serve as a welcoming place for not just Vietnam veterans, but for all veterans since the Vietnam War as well. As a result, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund as earmarked 75% of the jobs that will be created after the completion of the Education Center at the Wall for veterans, continuing their motto for veterans by veterans.³⁹ Unlike the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum in Virginia, which aims to provide its visitors with an experiential visit, the Education Center at the Wall intends to give its visitors a lasting emotional impact. They hope to achieve this emotional goal by teaching lessons in duty, honor, integrity, and courage. The Education Center at the Wall will be a self-

³⁷ Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, “Honoring Those Who Served and Sacrificed” (video), posted March 21, 2013, accessed September 6, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TeBe8kONfsw>.

³⁸ “Education Center,” Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, last updated 2015, accessed September 5, 2015, <http://www.vvmf.org/education-center>.

³⁹ Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, “Honoring Those Who Served and Sacrificed” (video).

guided exploration of the museum's exhibits, just like the museums in Texas and California. Photographs of architectural drawings and exhibit renderings are available in Appendix C with the permission of the Ralph Appelbaum Associates and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

While each of these organizations are working towards the same goal of establishing a museum that will educate the American public on the Vietnam War, each organization has envisioned a unique plan for accomplishing this goal. The Vietnam War Foundation in Ruckersville, Virginia currently provides its visitors with interactive displays and first-person narratives from those who served in Vietnam to explain the everyday experiences of those who served in the battlefields of Vietnam. As they operate today, the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum is the only organization that intends to provide their visitors with a guided tour of the museum's interpretive space. The National Vietnam War Museum in Weatherford, Texas has a similar goal as the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum by focusing on the experiences of those who served in Vietnam, but intend to expand beyond this concept by discussing in greater detail the political atmosphere that led the United States into the Vietnam War. Unlike any of the other museums discussed here, the National Vietnam War Museum has provided its visitors with several gardens to mediate and reflect in after learning about the Vietnam War. Assuming the Vietnam War Museum of America in Garden Grove, California, is ever constructed, they intend to focus less on those who served and focus instead on discussing the political backbone (context?) of the Vietnam Era. The Education Center at the Wall in Washington D.C. is probably the most unique of all the museums discussed because the museum will be dedicated entirely to those who served in Vietnam, with a

small section for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. The Center plans to do little to address the political issues surrounding the Vietnam Era, and it intends to serve as a shrine that honors our Vietnam veterans. While each of the goals are unique and ambitious in their own right, one trend is found across all four museums---educating the American public on the Vietnam Era.

In time, one can only hope that with the growing emergence of Vietnam Era museums that the national curriculum standards will begin to reflect the increasing efforts to preserve and interpret the Vietnam Era in the minds and memory of the American public. While some classroom teachers are using their current relationship with Vietnam veterans to provide their students with first-hand accounts of the Vietnam War, these living resources will not be available forever. These establishing museums have the opportunity to provide the American public with a permanent interpretation of the Vietnam Era, which has the potential to increase awareness about the lack of educational standards centered on the Vietnam Era. Only the future holds the lasting educational impact that these museums will have on the future generations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Vietnam War Foundation & Museum Oral Histories

Oral History with Craig LaMountain, founder of the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum (6 minutes 10 seconds)

Erica Bettross: What year was the museum founded?

Craig LaMountain: I started back in 1996, by myself. I had lost my brother in Vietnam; he was a naval aviator. My cousin was my age and came back from Vietnam, made it through, and then died of Agent Orange poisoning.

Erica: Okay.

Craig: And the cancer just ate him up. And they weren't teaching it in school, so I started what I do now with a slideshow to different high schools. It was received so well that I just continued to do it. I bought a jeep, and then I bought a truck. Then the helicopter came around, it just kept adding on.

Erica: Alright. Who were the original founders of the museum? Was it just you, or were there other people who helped you found it as well?

Craig: When it became a cooperation about six years ago, it was Dick Thompson and myself.

Erica: Okay.

Craig: Most, ninety (90) percent of the equipment and the items here are mine that I have collected over the years.

Erica: Okay. You kind of mentioned on it, but what was the original idea or concept behind the museum?

Craig: Well, its just to give honor to the Vietnam vets. It was back in that time that you were spit on and called names. This was a way of honoring the Vietnam vet.

Erica: Alright. Where does or did a majority of your funding come from?

Craig: Just donations through the door. Amazingly, it does support itself, but then we are on my property.

Erica: Right. So, most of my thesis is focusing on how public memory has played an impact of the memorialization and preservation of the Vietnam Era. So, I case studied the wall and how there was a lot of people supporting the wall and not supporting the wall

that was built in Washington D.C.. So what I want to look at with your museum, was when you originally announced your plans of the museum to the local community, how did they react or respond? Was there any negativity?

Craig: Eh. No, I haven't had any negativity. In fact, I had to get a special use permit to be down here with this equipment and have open houses. You know flyers were sent out to all the neighbors, and they were all, none of them objected to it.

Erica: Okay. And have you seen responses, or do the responses vary between Vietnam veterans and the average civilian?

Craig: Well its for the Vietnam vet, it's a good place to heal. Where he wouldn't talk about it. Now, he goes in there and sees these items again. He starts to talk to another vet, and before you know it they're exchanging stories, and a lot of funny things that have happened.

Erica: Mhm.

Craig: When they leave there they are in a different state of mind then when they came.

Erica: And do you see that as a different response from the civilians, like myself, that come in?

Craig: If, the people who come in, because we are by appointment and open houses, they are generally interested in this period of time. Or just with memorabilia and history. So no, they seem to really enjoy it. That's what supports us, if they didn't we wouldn't have the funds.

Erica: Okay. Have the responses changed over the years? Have you gotten more positive responses?

Craig: Well, we keep growing. I mean it just constantly. Even our Facebook page, we tried very hard when we first started out to get twenty (20) likes, and now we are up to 1,700.

Erica: Yeah, I follow y'all. Y'all are doing a really good job.

Craig: We read the reviews of what people are doing. We have more and more schools coming as far as you know, private schools and home schools. Now our first high school is coming.

Erica: Right, and that is a public school?

Craig: Yeah, a public high school up in Charlottesville. Which is a biggy.

Erica: Yes. And then, I didn't originally have this question written down, but my last question is: where do you see the museum in ten (10) years?

Craig: If I'm alive. We've got plans right now. We have an architect working on plans for our new location. And the funding, we are going after grants. Hopefully, within the next five (5) years, we will be off the property and on the main drag.

Erica: On like 29 or 33?

Craig: Unfortunately, it is right now its scheduled for 231 Gordonsville at the VFW on their piece of property.

Erica: Okay. In Gordonsville, Virginia?

Craig: Yes.

Erica: Okay, I'm not from here, so I just wanted to make sure.

Craig: 33 would be better, and it might be that once we get the funding. Right now they have offered us land. It will lose something when it leaves here, because here you can have a hands-on [experience]. We are going to have to rope off a lot more things unlike in a regular museum because you are not going to have the personnel to watch. This is a very a very hands-on, very talky. You know, people walk you through it, and it makes it very down to earth. You're not just reading a sign.

Erica: Right.

Craig: And that makes a difference.

Erica: It does. That's the reason that I fell in love with it when I visited last year.

Craig: Yep.

Erica: Thank you so much that was all of my questions.

Craig: Okay. Well good. Anything else you want to question, just give me a yell.

Erica: Okay, will do.

Oral History with Dick Thompson, co-founder of the Vietnam War Foundation & Museum (34 minutes 28 seconds)

Erica Bettross: I asked all these questions to Craig as well, I just wanted to get opinions and see if they matched up and everything.

Dick Thompson: Okay.

Erica: So, he said that his concept originally started around 1996, and that you came in about six years ago when it became a cooperation.

Dick: Yeah, uh.

Erica: Okay.

Dick: He retired down here about seven or eight years ago, I guess. And he had the huey sitting on a trailer. The local newspaper did an article on it, and since I flew hueys I got interested, and I got all my flight gear in footlockers. So, I said "ehe, I'll take it all over", so I donated all my flight gear, and it is all in there still. The uniforms, helmet, and the emergency gear, and all of the kind of stuff that you save, but what to do with when you start cleaning out footlockers and things. So, then I said, "Well, I'll help ya". You know, see what we can do. So we are actually paying for a lot of it out of our own pocket, and we said, "This can't go on for very long". Just from a monetary standpoint, so we looked into incooperating and 501c3. The lawyers wanted a massive amount of money to do all that, so we looked around and found folks at the Virginia Association of Museums. The gal down there, she is not there now, the director. She said, "Well, if you guys want to come down, I'll help you". So, we actually sat in her office, wrote the constitution, bylaws, and cooperation with here. She had formats. Submitted them, and we became incooperated, and that was in February of 2009. Then we went back and sat down to do the 501c3 to the IRS. That was a little longer, twenty-six (26) pages with eight (8) appendixes. A pain in the ass.

Erica: Boring?

Dick: Yeah, but we spent the whole day there. Actually, maybe a couple days, and submitted that. She said it normally takes six (6) to eight (8) months. Well it came through and it was approved in June 2009. Real fast, so without her help we wouldn't have that. Then we applied, and I do most of the paperwork, and what I don't do Barb does from the accounting standpoint. We applied for federal surplus, and that was to get some of these old trucks, tentage, and Vietnam Era items that were still left in the surplus system. For four (4) years, we were part of the surplus system, but then the regulations got us. Because the regulation that said that we have to have posted hours with someone onsite during those posted hours for 1,100, or 1,000, whatever it is.

Erica: Right.

Dick: We are open more than that, and we kind of skirted that regulation for a while, and they helped us out. Then GSA got involved and their inspection in Richmond, and they said we can't do it anymore.

Erica: Right.

Dick: So, we are not now a federal surplus. That has dropped out.

Erica: Okay.

Dick: For the first year or so, we got some donations, which kind of helped a little.

Erica: Monetary donations?

Dick: Yes. Monetary, yes so we could pay for the paint. Like the paint on that 0-2 FAC (plane), that was \$1,500. I mean it is a very special paint. The huey that we just painted was \$500. There are lots of expenses that people don't think about.

Erica: Right.

Dick: Big things, we have been supported by the American Legion Post 74. They paid for all of this blacktop for handicap. They also paid for our air conditioner and heater, so we can operate pretty well year round. We still have the operating expenses. Propane, electric, and things like that. Then they also helped us with some of the add on here, [at the museum], with the new admin area here. They gave us a donation for that. The VFW, the local VFW, pays for our porta-potty. That is \$75 a month. They do things like that.

Erica: And that was the VFW?

Dick: Yeah, 2044 VFW, that's right out here in Earlysville. Not far from where you are camping. Then other veterans' groups, Vietnam Veterans of America chapters when they come for a tour they give us nice checks. The schools that come, they also donate. Private schools, I don't know if we would get anything from the public schools.

Erica: Right.

Dick: Private schools have a little bit more money. And the homeschool organizations always leave a check. So, in the last four years, except for normal expenses of the volunteers doing whatever they are doing, it has all been covered by donations.

Erica: Okay.

Dick: Which is really not rich, but pays the bills. Like that .50 caliber up there demonstrator. We just bought that, it is \$2,500. So we do have to buy the neat things that

make it a little bit different. And we have repairs you know. We let everybody into the vehicles and aircraft, things are going to get broken. Kids have a tendency to want to turn every switch. Not only the kids, the parents. So there are those types of expenses. So, yeah. It has been good. Now, to follow on, it can't stay here forever.

Erica: Right.

Dick: I don't know if Craig got into that with you.

Erica: Um, he mentioned that y'all might be looking in Gordonsville, Virginia.

Dick: Yeah, we been going through the looking here locally to stay on 29, 33 or in Greene County. We have had very little success finding property or anybody to take it to the next level. What we are concerned about is of the six (6) board members, there (3) have had serious cancer. Craig, my wife, and Rob. The other three are over seventy-five (75). I'm seventy-five, Allen is seventy-seven (77), so we are all long in the tooth, and anything can happen. And then we start dying off fast, what happens to us?

Erica: Right.

Dick: So, we are trying to take it to the next step. The VFW post, I can't remember the post, its over there in Gordonsville.

Erica: 231?

Dick: No, it is on Route 231.

Erica: Okay.

Dick: Just south of the circle there. I can't remember the post number. They have fourteen (14) acres that was donated to them years ago. And the post commander would set aside two (2) or three (3) acres behind the post in a big field for the museum. So what we are doing now, I am working with an architect out of the valley putting together what it would cost and a design for a permanent home. It is basically a seventy-five (75) foot wide by 150 long building, with an entrance area that is two (2) stories, and the rest of it open to a twenty (20) foot ceiling. We think that it will run between a million and \$1.5 million because it is very similar to this, but bigger. It is four (4) times bigger than what we have. To include a two-story entrance area. First floor entrance, kind of what we have here. Second floor kitchen, meeting room, and office space. Bathrooms on the first floor. Something that we could rent out, you know for meetings. We host a lot of meetings here. So, the VFW commander has a guy that writes grants for a living, and so when we have the package put together, I'll put together the mission statement, and the stuff that I have sent you. Our incooperation and 501c3. I have a pretty good inventory of everything that got updated, and I have a write-up for what they displays are, approximate

dimensions for each display. I have not updated what we would like to do. We would like to put a village, a Vietnamese village.

Erica: Oh, that would be cool.

Dick: Yeah, inside. And expand, everything is jammed in there now.

Erica: Right.

Dick: Expand. Then hang, the roof will be stressed, so we can hang helicopters or light fixtures up to 10,000 pounds.

Erica: Okay.

Dick: It's a twenty (20), twenty-two (22), foot ceiling. We could really do a lot with it.

Erica: When do you think you will submit that grant? Do you know when you are going to turn the grant in?

Dick: It depends on the architect. We have gone through an initial ... He was here yesterday, he brought his wife ... probably within the next couple of weeks we will get that. Then I will put together, I pretty well have all the other stuff, I just have to update it. I would say in the next month or so.

Erica: Can you send that to me?

Dick: Sure.

Erica: Just a copy of it.

Dick: I can't, there will be architectural drawings and we are already getting two (2) of them.

Erica: Well, I just want the stuff, not necessarily the architectural drawings but like your plans for all of the exhibits.

Dick: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Erica: That would be extremely ...

Dick: Oh, all the write-ups I will send you. I'll keep that. And I can send you what I have in the drawings. You have to have a magnifying glass if you print them out.

Erica: Okay.

Dick: Because they are shrunk down to letter size paper.

Erica: Okay.

Dick: I'll just put you, CC you on everything.

Erica: Thank you.

Dick: Yeah, that's fine. So that's the future. Once that happens, Craig and I and Barb, and it goes to another level, we are just going to become worker bees, which we are now. Then you get the people with the names and the recognition as the board members. It has to go to that level to sustain.

Erica: Right.

Dick: We just can't sustain. Well, we did sustain and alive here until the next step. We don't want to loose it. The one, part of the problem going to the next, how do we document who owns it. I own some. Craig owns majority because he bought it. The foundation owns some. I know it, and Craig know it, but nobody else does.

Erica: Right.

Dick: So, that's got to be done, and that is going to take awhile. But it has got to be done if we move into another facility.

Erica. Right. So, back in 2009, or even early, just when it was Craig working on it, what was the original idea or original inspiration for this?

Dick: His inspiration, and I think it has carried through to everybody that has volunteered is education. When he lost his brother, nobody cared. Up until about ten (10) year ago the attitude was who cares about Vietnam. So, there was nothing being taught in any of the schools. And he has always been military equipment oriented, and part of his mechanical vehicle background. So, he got into taking stuff to schools and all that kind of stuff. So that is the way we wrote it up in our mission statement. Educate the public and schools about Vietnam and the experience of Vietnam. The word "experience" actually evolved. Bob Paul, over there, came up with it. We are not just a museum. We are a Vietnam experience, and that kind of exemplifies the whole operating mode of the museum. We try and let folks now how it was. We are not political.

Erica: Right.

Dick: You know that. Every once in a while somebody asks about it, but we cover from the peace side to the VC side. Mainly the American, GI, airmen, the guys on the ground, how it lived, experiences, what it was like, the equipment, you can see all of the equipment, antiquated as it is. It is more realistic if you go to Quantico, one of the

national museums, you can't touch anything. It is read only. Here we try and get them into the cockpit, like that guy sticking his head out of the 47 over there. Where is he going to be able to do that in D.C.? You can't.

Erica: Right.

Dick: And his kids are sitting in the seats there. In an actual C-47. That is unique. They will remember that more than wondering around in a sterile environment.

Erica: Right.

Dick: Now, I don't know how you get around the federal regulations in a regular museum. They are very stringent about the equipment and what you can do with it and how you can touch it and all. We would try and keep it this way.

Erica: Right.

Dick: Once you accept anything from the federal government on loan, you have their strings attached.

Erica: Right. All the red tape.

Dick: Yep. Yep.

Erica: When originally announcing plans to the local community that you were going to be building this museum, and that it was going to be in their backyard, how did they react or respond to the idea?

Dick: I think it just evolved. We never really had a campaign to do that. As we built and got volunteers, all Vietnam vets, and they showed up and stuck around. We are past. We don't have an active advertising. We never had any pushback from anybody. The county and the tourist board, and all that they love us. They are going to feel sad. All the groups that come buy gas and food on 29.

Erica: Right.

Dick: It is economics. No we have never had any pushback, but we never. We don't even have a pushback when we fire the weapons. The local sheriff, he is one of our best supporters, he comes and says, "I don't care if you real weapons, let alone blanks". We never had any pushback at all.

Erica: Okay.

Dick: Everybody supports us.

Erica: Good.

Dick: Then when we expanded the brick walkway out there, those are all local veterans, veterans' wives. Like yesterday, Mod Putto [spelling?], her husband died five (5) years ago. She was one of the first people who bought a brick. She comes every Memorial Day, every 4th of July, and every Veteran's Day. That is the kind of attitude, and she brings all of her friends. If you look at the walkway out there, it is a lot of local folks that have bought the bricks to support us. So, they are kind of part of it in that way. In the last couple of years, with Vietnam Era folks dying off, we are getting more and more memorabilia coming around. Uniforms, stuff that is stuck in drawers. We never had any pushback. We get a lot of vets that have trouble visiting, but that is post-traumatic stress not anti, but they do come. Some of them will come inside. We had one yesterday, he was with his wife. He had a hard time; took him about a half-hour to get inside. But, he spent two (2) hours inside once he got there. I think he felt better. That is one, even though we are a teaching, we get a little healing too. That is an offshoot, it was not a major objective when we started, but it is nice. Like our nurse, the nurse inside, we haven't seen her in three (3) years. She helped us. What else you got?

Erica: Um. A lot of my stuff, the chapter I have already written looking at the wall construction in 1982 in Washington D.C., and there was a lot of negative pushback with that. I am trying to see in light of the 50th anniversary, and museums now being established, with y'all being the first, how is changing? Are we still getting negative pushbacks? So, there was a huge difference in responses between Vietnam vets and civilians in response to the wall.

Dick: Oh yeah.

Erica: So, are there differences in responses between vets and civilians here?

Dick: I don't think so. We haven't seen it. No. If you had asked me that ten (10) years ago, I probably would have given you a different answer. The whole environment of the military veteran has changed in the last ten (10) years. Ten (10) years ago we would have never worn hats. You never saw that. One reason because of the attitude leftover from what it was when we came back from Vietnam. And the other is just the lack of knowledge. The whole environment for the military servicemen has changed. Here since 2009, civilians, veterans, press, news agencies, just everybody has been positive. It has been very positive. I don't know of anyone, anyone, and I have been here for every major event, has ever been negative. I think that the civilians walk away to a person with a better understanding of what it was like. Most of them are children of vets. Then the vets walk away with a little remembrance of what it was like with their families. They actually open up. We have had a lot of three (3) generations. Grandkids, kids, and vets. Comments coming out, the grandkids say, "I never knew PopPop to ever talk so much about it" and then the wife would say, "I learned more about my husband today than I have in forty years". People that have absolutely no connection with the military walk away and say, "I

didn't know this, and I didn't know that", and that is really interesting. It has been positive that way.

Erica: Good.

Dick: The only negative I have seen, and it has to deal with Craig's brother. He lost his brother in Vietnam. One of the reasons he started this. When the Navy turned down the request from the unit that he was transporting to not have their names on the wall. His name is not on the wall. Because it was a classified flight, and he wasn't really doing what he was really doing. Officially. So, when it was declassified the Fort Meade spook outfit he was flying went to the Navy and requested that these people, there people, and there were seventeen (17) of them, should be on the wall. Qualified. Because he was flying from [] bay to Saigon, but they didn't exist paperwork wise. But, it was turned down. I'm not sure why. It does not make any sense. They are always adding people to the wall as they are found and identified. Now there is that if you die of a wound that you received in Vietnam that related causes fifty (50) years later, but your name can be added to the wall. If they are doing that, then why didn't Craig['s brother], his co-pilot, and all his passengers, but that is Navy bureaucracy.

Erica: Right.

Dick: Pentagon. Craig, I think, has given up on it. Trying to do anything on it. So that is kind of a sad thing, and it should be. I think that it is a positive experience.

Erica: It is. I love it here.

Dick: Yeah. We would love to have you here if we could pay you, but we can't do that. Now if you get a job in the area, you can come volunteer.

APPENDIX B

Photographs of the National Vietnam War Museum

Outdoor Exhibits:



Figure 1: Throughout the Semper Fi Garden are restored military vehicles dating to the Vietnam War, such as this AMTRAC. Photographed is Dave Harper and Jim Messinger, National Vietnam War Museum Treasurer. Photograph courtesy of the National Vietnam War Museum, October 2015.



Figure 2: The Vietnam Memorial Garden contains a 300-foot replica of the Moving Wall, which is a $\frac{1}{2}$ scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. Photograph courtesy of the National Vietnam War Museum, October 2015.



Figure 3: The Contemplation Garden is one of six memorial gardens located on the National Vietnam War Museum's property. There are two key aspects of this garden. First is the Vietnam Era replica huey with rotating blades. Second is the only replica of the Camp Holloway Memorial, which was located on the post in Pleiku, South Vietnam. Photography courtesy of the National Vietnam War Museum, October 2015.



Figure 4: The National Vietnam War Museum's collection is housed in their visitor center, which is currently a small trailer. Photography courtesy of the National Vietnam War Museum, October 2015.

Indoor Exhibits:

Figures 5-7: Interior views of the exhibit space at the National Vietnam War Museum in Mineral Wells, Texas. Photographs courtesy of the National Vietnam War Museum, October 2015.



Figure 8: This “Hootch” exhibit teach guests about the variety of living of conditions that soldiers faced while serving in Vietnam. Photograph courtesy of the National Vietnam War Museum, October 2015.

Museum Development Plans:



Figure 9: Front view of the 2016 Construction Plan for the National Vietnam War Museum in Mineral Wells, Texas. The museum is currently still in the process of gathering funds to break construction of this proposed design. Photograph courtesy of the National Vietnam War Museum, March 2016.

Main Building

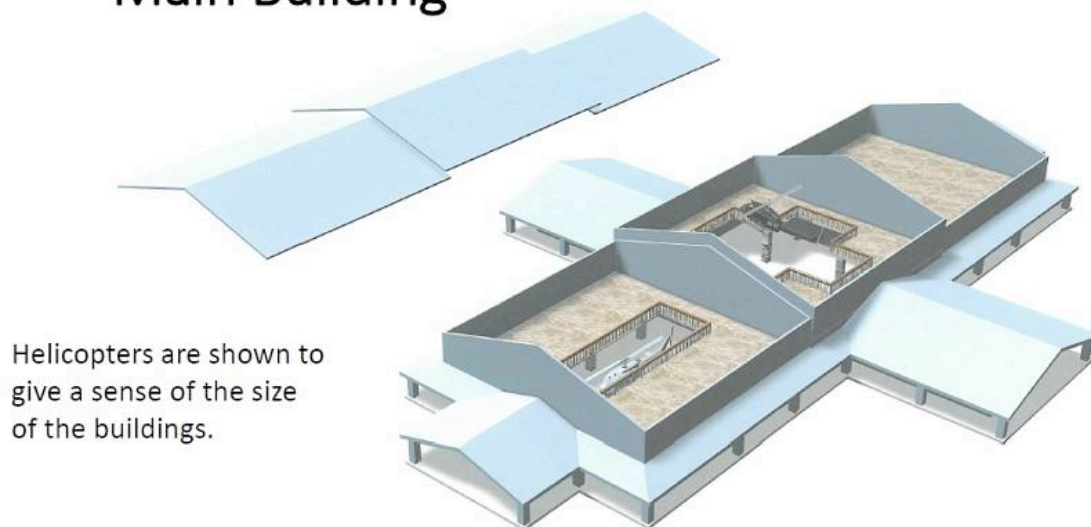


Figure 10: Interior view of the 2016 Construction Plan for the National Vietnam War Museum. Photograph courtesy of the National Vietnam War Museum, March 2016.



Figure 11: Rendering of “Introduction” exhibit to be built during phase I of construction at the National Vietnam War Museum. Photograph courtesy of the Southwest Museum Services via the National Vietnam War Museum, October 2015.



Figure 12: In the “Home Front” exhibit, guests will be placed in the Presidential Oval Office during Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency in the late 1960s. A multi-television console that will be playing historic media clips reporting on the Vietnam Era will surround guests. Photograph courtesy of the Southwest Museum Services via the National Vietnam War Museum, October 2015.



Figure 13: Professional rendering of the “Fort Wolters” exhibit that will discuss the history of Fort Wolters, which is a former military base located in Mineral Wells, Texas. During the Vietnam War, the United States military used the fort as a training school for helicopter pilots. Photograph courtesy of the Southwest Museum Services via the National Vietnam War Museum, October 2015.

APPENDIX C

Professional Renderings of the Education Center at the Wall

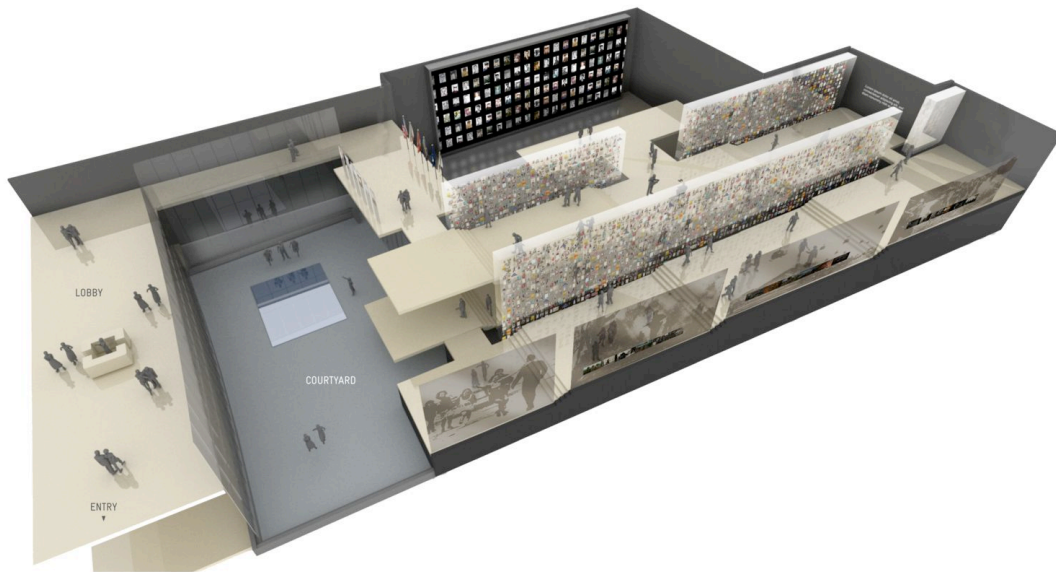


Figure 1: Interior design of the exhibit space at the Education Center at the Wall in Washington, D.C. Rendering by Ralph Applebaum Associates, provided courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation, October 2015.



Figure 2: “The Legacy of Service Hall” exhibit will a history of the United States’ conflicts, from Bunker Hill to Baghdad. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Funds aims for this exhibit to be a place of civic reflection. Rendering by Ralph Applebaum Associates, provided courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation, October 2015.



Figure 3: “The Wall of Faces” exhibit displays the faces of the 58,000+ soldiers who are memorialized on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. In addition to the victims of the Vietnam War, a tribute will also be included for those who died in Iraq and Afghanistan. Rendering by Ralph Applebaum Associates, provided courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation, October 2015.



Figure 4: Visitors of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial leave thousands of items each year. The “Items Left at the Wall” exhibit will showcase some of these items, which have been collected and maintained by the National Park Service since 1982. Rendering by Ralph Applebaum Associates, provided courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation, October 2015.



Figure 5: The “Time Line” exhibit will present a photograph timeline that outlines the most divisive moments in American history during the Vietnam Era, both in the battlefields and on the home front. Rendering by Ralph Applebaum Associates, provided courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation, October 2015.

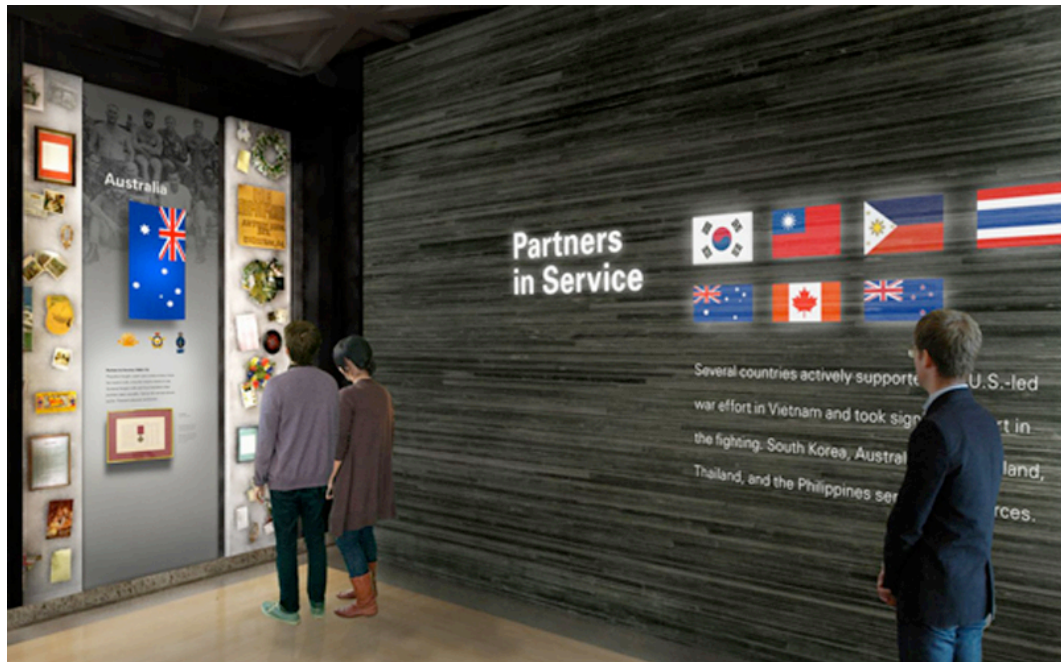


Figure 6: The “Partners in Service” exhibit will pay honor to the countries that supported the United States led war effort in Vietnam. Rendering by Ralph Applebaum Associates, provided courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation, October 2015.

APPENDIX D

Permission Letters for Photographs

FIGURE 2

Hi Erica,

I received your inquiry regarding the archives of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. I am afraid we don't have publicly accessible documents dating to the memorial construction, though we do have some photos that I can share of the original drawings submitted by Maya Lin, her artist statement, and her model. We also have a few examples of other entries to the design competition, and all the entries are accessible at the Library of Congress.

If you like, you can draft some questions for the memorial's founder and VVMF president Jan Scruggs, and I can pass them along to him to see if he might be able to respond. Let me know if you'd be interested.

Best,
Reema

--

Reema A. Ghazi
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202-393-0090 ext. 120
<http://www.vvmf.org/vvmf-education>
CFC #: 11070 | United Way #: 1184

Join our Hometown Heroes Project: <http://www.vvmf.org/hometown-heroes>

Follow us!

Facebook - Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund

Twitter - @VVMF

Instagram - @vnaveteransmemorial

FIGURE 3

Dear Michael,

Hello! My name is Erica Bettross and I am a graduate student at MTSU who is in the process of completing my thesis on the American efforts to memorialize and preserve the memory of the Vietnam War. In my thesis I reference the Maryland Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I was hoping to include one of the photographs that you took on your visit their. Do I have your permission to use the picture that is below?

Thanks,

Erica R. Bettross
MA Public History Student
History Day Assistant Coordinator
Middle Tennessee State University
erb4b@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Certainly, as long as you give me a photo credit.

Is there a way that I might see the finished project? I'd love to read it.

Mike

Michael F Walsh
A Means To Heal
ameanstoheal.org

Hi,

Yes, you will be credited as the photographer. *Photograph of the Maryland Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Baltimore, Maryland, which was dedicated on May 28, 1989. Photograph taken on September 19, 2009 by Vietnam veteran Michael Walsh. Photograph courtesy of Michael Walsh, March 2016.*

I would love to share my findings with you. I should be completely finalized by early May.

Thank you,

Erica R. Bettross
MA Public History Student
History Day Assistant Coordinator
Middle Tennessee State University
erb4b@mtmail.mtsu.edu

FIGURES 5-6

Erica:

Consider this email as approval to use all photographs from our website, Facebook page or photo albums at the Museum for your Thesis.

Looking forward to seeing it.

Dick

Dick Thompson
Vice President
Vietnam War Foundation
www.vietnamwarfoundation.org
(540) 832-3470
dickthom3941@gmail.com

APPENDIX B FIGURES 1-13

Erica, Thanks for contacting us. We are always available to anyone interested in the Vietnam Era. We especially enjoy helping students.

First, your questions:

1. I know the museum is operated entirely by volunteers. What percentage of these volunteers are Vietnam veterans? We have over 70 active volunteers and I seldom check on their status, but our board of directors has 13 members and 12 are Vietnam Veterans, our Visitor Center staff is 9 and 8 are Vietnam Veterans. Of the remainder (approximately 50), I expect that 75% are Vietnam or Vietnam Era veterans.
2. Do any school groups currently visit your visitor center? Yes. We have hosted a college history club and a few high school groups, a few grade school groups and a couple of boy scout groups. We also have Vietnam Veterans reunions in the area and they typically send a busload to visit.
3. Do I have the permission of the National Vietnam War Museum to utilize the photographs of the museum's development plan of the exhibit plan? All copyright will be addressed in the paper and full credit will be given to the museum and Southwest Museum Services. Yes, feel free to use anything on our website. If you need better resolution or more information feel free to contact me directly through my personal e-mail jmessinger@wc.edu or cell phone 940-452-1470.

Other things:

Our mission is: To promote an understanding of the Vietnam Era while honoring those who served.

All of our work has been privately funded, and while we are very proud of what we have done, we still need to build the main museum facility. We have started a building fund, and hired a contractor to prepare a phased plan to build the facility in 4 phases. With proper funding, we expect to begin construction of phase 1 next year. This is early notice to you as it has not been publicized. We have a funding plan in place and expect to have a budget in the spring.

I know the Master's Thesis can be quite big, but we would love to have a copy of your work if that is possible. We have a strong supporter in upstate New York who found us through her Master's Thesis many years ago with a topic very similar to yours.

Good luck with your project.

Jim

Jim Messinger, PhD
Treasurer

APPENDIX C
FIGURES 1-6

Erica,

See below a forwarded message from VVMF's exhibition designer on the ECW project, Ralph Appelbaum Associates. This message contains the preferred language for any credit line pertaining to the ECW exhibit renderings.

Also, can you provide me with a little context on how you came by those images? Were they drawn from VVMF's website, or were you provided files by a VVMF staff member?

Best of luck to you on your graduate thesis and in all your future endeavors.

Regards,

-Jason

Jason R. Bain

Senior Collections Curator

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
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Washington, DC 20037

jbain@vvmf.org

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[425.330.3664](tel:425.330.3664) (C)

www.vvmf.org | www.buildthecenter.org

CFC #: 11070 | United Way #: 1184

Hi Jason,

I hope all is well.

Is the graduate student pulling images from the Ed Center Website? It would be good to confirm.

Assuming if that is the case, we'd recommend that the credit is as follows:

"Rendering by Ralph Appelbaum Associates, provided courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation."

Thanks,

B

--

Brook Anderson | RAA

88 Pine Street New York NY 10005

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