The **Vietnam Veterans Memorial** is a national memorial in Washington, D.C. It honors U.S. service members of the U.S. armed forces who fought in the Vietnam War, service members who died in service in Vietnam/South East Asia, and those service members who were unaccounted for (Missing In Action) during the War.

Its construction and related issues have been the source of controversies, some of which have resulted in additions to the memorial complex. The memorial currently consists of three separate parts: the Three Soldiers statue, the Vietnam Women's Memorial, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, which is the best-known part of the memorial.

The main part of the memorial, which was completed in 1982, is in Constitution Gardens adjacent to the National Mall, just northeast of the Lincoln Memorial. The memorial is maintained by the U.S. National Park Service, and receives around 3 million visitors each year. The Memorial Wall was designed by U.S. architect Maya Lin. The typesetting of the original 58,175 names on the wall was performed by Datalantic in Atlanta, Georgia. In 2007, it was ranked tenth on the "List of America's Favorite Architecture" by the American Institute of Architects.
History

- April 30, 1975 – The Fall of Saigon.
- April 27, 1979 – The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc. (VVMF), was incorporated as a non-profit organization to establish a memorial to veterans of the Vietnam War. Much of the impetus behind the formation of the fund came from a wounded Vietnam veteran, Jan Scruggs, who was inspired by the film *The Deer Hunter*. Eventually, $8.4 million was raised by private donations.
- July 1, 1980 – Congress authorizes 3 acres (12000 m²) near the Lincoln Memorial for the site. The "temporary" Munitions Building, built for War Department offices during World War I and finally razed in 1965, formerly occupied the site. The memorial is to be managed by the National Park Service under its National Mall and Memorial Parks group. A design competition is announced.
- December 29, 1980 – 2,573 register for design competition with a prize of $50,000.
- March 31, 1981 – 1,421 designs submitted. The designs are displayed at an airport hangar at Andrews Air Force Base for the selection committee, in rows covering more than 35000 square feet (3300 m²) of floor space. Each entry was identified by number only, to preserve the anonymity of their authors. All entries were examined by each juror; the entries were narrowed down to 232, finally 39. The jury selected entry number 1026.
- May 6, 1981 – A jury of eight architects and sculptors (Harry Weese, Richard Hunt, Garret Eckbo, Costantino Nivola, James Rosati, Grady Clay, Hideo Sasaki, Pietro Belluschi, working with architectural advisor Paul Spreiregen) unanimously selected a design by Maya Ying Lin, a 21-year-old Yale University architecture student from Athens, Ohio, as the winner from 1,421 entries.
- January 1982 – The Three Soldiers was added to the design as a result of controversy over Lin's design.
- March 11, 1982 – The design is formally approved.
- March 26, 1982 – Ground is formally broken.
- October 13, 1982 – The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts approves erection of a flagpole to be grouped with sculptures.
- November 13, 1982 – Memorial dedication after a march to its site by thousands of Vietnam War veterans. As a National Memorial it was administratively listed on the National Register of Historic Places the same day.
- November 1984 – The Three Soldiers statue is dedicated.
- November 11, 1993 – Vietnam Women's Memorial is dedicated.
- 1994 – The Pentagon, instead of adding two unidentified bodies of Vietnam veterans to the Tomb of the Unknowns, recommended that a display of medals be added behind the tomb with a plaque reading: "Let all know that the United States of America pays tribute to the members of the Armed Forces who answered their country's call." A Veterans Affairs subcommittee later changed the statement to read: "Let all know that the United States of America pays tribute to the members of the Armed Forces who served honorably in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Era." Later, in 1998, Congress, prodded by the Vietnam-Era Caucus (composed of veteran Congressmen), discussed creating a "Vietnam Veterans Week" to honor the survivors of the war.
- November 10, 2004 – Dedication of memorial plaque honoring veterans who died after the war as a direct result of injuries suffered in Vietnam, but who fall outside Department of Defense guidelines.
Structure

Memorial Wall

The Memorial Wall, designed by Maya Lin, is made up of two gabbro walls 246 feet 9 inches (75 m) long.[2] [3] The walls are sunk into the ground, with the earth behind them. At the highest tip (the apex where they meet), they are 10.1 feet (3 m) high, and they taper to a height of eight inches (20 cm) at their extremities. Stone for the wall came from Bangalore, Karnataka, India, and was deliberately chosen because of its reflective quality. The Lincoln memorial can be seen in the distance. Stone cutting and fabrication was done in Barre, Vermont. Stones were then shipped to Memphis, Tennessee where the names were etched. The etching was completed using a photoemulsion and sandblasting process. The negatives used in the process are in storage at the Smithsonian Institution. When a visitor looks upon the wall, his or her reflection can be seen simultaneously with the engraved names, which is meant to symbolically bring the past and present together. One wall points toward the Washington Monument, the other in the direction of the Lincoln Memorial, meeting at an angle of 125° 12′. Each wall has 72 panels, 70 listing names (numbered 1E through 70E and 70W through 1W) and 2 very small blank panels at the extremities. There is a pathway along the base of the Wall, where visitors may walk, read the names, make a pencil rubbing of a particular name, or pray.

Inscribed on the walls with the Optima typeface are the names of servicemen who were either confirmed to be KIA (Killed in Action) or remained classified as MIA (Missing in Action) when the walls were constructed in 1982. They are listed in chronological order, starting at the apex on panel 1E in 1959 (although it was later discovered that the first casualties were military advisers who were killed by artillery fire in 1957), moving day by day to the end of the eastern wall at panel 70E, which ends on May 25, 1968, starting again at panel 70W at the end of the western wall which completes the list for May 25, 1968, and returning to the apex at panel 1W in 1975. Symbolically, this is described as a "wound that is closed and healing." Information about rank, unit, and decorations are not given. The wall listed 58,191 names when it was completed in 1993; as of June 2010, there are 58,267 names, including 8 women. Approximately 1,200 of these are listed as missing (MIAs, POWs, and others), denoted with a cross; the confirmed dead are marked with a diamond. If the missing return alive, the cross is circumscribed by a circle (although this has never occurred as of March 2009); if their death is confirmed, a diamond is superimposed over the cross. According to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, "there is no definitive answer to exactly how many, but there could be as many as 38 names of personnel who survived, but through clerical errors, were added to the list of fatalities provided by the Department of Defense."[4] Directories are located on nearby podiums so that visitors may locate specific names.
Beginning and ending timeline for those listed on the wall

- November 1, 1955 – Dwight D. Eisenhower deploys Military Assistance Advisory Group to train the South Vietnamese military units and secret police. However, the U.S. Department of Defense does not recognize such date since the men were supposedly only training the Vietnamese. The officially recognized date is the formation of the Military Assistance Command Viet-Nam, better known as MACV. This marks the official beginning of American involvement in the war as recognized by the memorial.

- June 8, 1956 – The first official death in Vietnam is U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant Richard B. Fitzgibbon, Jr. of Stoneham, MA who was killed by another U.S. airman.

- July 8, 1959 – Charles Ovnand and Dale R. Buis are killed by guerrillas at Bien Hoa while watching the film The Tattered Dress. They are listed 1 and 2 at the wall's dedication. Ovnand's name is spelled on the memorial as "Ovnard," due to conflicting military records of his surname.

- April 30, 1975 – Fall of Saigon. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs uses May 7, 1975 as the official end date for the Vietnam era as defined by Title 38 U.S. Code Section 101.

- May 15, 1975 – 18 Marines are killed on the last day of a rescue operation known as the Mayagüez incident with troops from the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. They are the last servicemen listed on the timeline.

The Three Soldiers

A short distance away from the wall is another Vietnam memorial, a bronze statue named The Three Soldiers (sometimes called The Three Servicemen). Negative reactions to Lin's design created a controversy; a compromise was reached by commissioning Frederick Hart (who had placed third in the original design competition) to produce a bronze figurative sculpture in the heroic tradition in order to complement the memorial wall. The statue was unveiled in 1984 and depicts three soldiers, purposefully identifiable as White American, African American, and Hispanic American. The statue and the Wall appear to interact with each other, with the soldiers looking on in solemn tribute at the names of their fallen comrades. The distance between the two allows them to interact while minimizing the impact of the addition on Lin's design.

Women's Memorial

Also part of the memorial is the Vietnam Women's memorial. It is located a short distance south of the Wall, north of the Reflecting Pool. It was designed by Glenna Goodacre and dedicated on November 11, 1993, to the women of the United States who served in the Vietnam War, most of whom were nurses. The woman looking up is named Hope, the woman praying is named Faith, and the woman tending to a wounded soldier is named Charity.
**In Memory memorial plaque**

A memorial plaque, authorized by Pub.L. 106-214 \[5\], was dedicated on November 10, 2004, at the northeast corner of the plaza surrounding the Three Soldiers statue to honor veterans who died after the war as a direct result of injuries suffered in Vietnam, but who fall outside Department of Defense guidelines. The plaque is a carved block of black granite, 3 feet (0.91 m) by 2 feet (0.61 m), inscribed "In memory of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War and later died as a result of their service. We honor and remember their sacrifice."

Ruth Coder Fitzgerald, founder of The Vietnam War In Memory Memorial Plaque Project, worked for years and struggled against opposition to have the In Memory Memorial Plaque completed. The organization was disbanded, but their web site \[6\] is maintained by the Vietnam War Project at Texas Tech University \[7\].

**Controversies**

The Vietnam War was one of the longest and most controversial wars in United States history. A stated goal of the memorial fund was to avoid commentary on the war itself, serving solely as a memorial to those who served. Nevertheless, a number of controversies have surrounded the memorial.

**Maya Lin**

The design for the memorial was chosen from entries submitted in a national contest. As depicted in a documentary about Maya Ying Lin (*Maya Ying Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*), reactions to the chosen memorial design were intensely mixed. At the time of the contest, Lin was a young student at Yale University.

**Veterans' opposition to design**

The unconventionality of the selected design was very controversial, especially among veterans. Many publicly voiced their displeasure, calling the wall "a black gash of shame." To the public outcry about the design.

Once the design was realized, the overwhelming majority of the design's critics came to appreciate the simple beauty and emotional power of the wall, and such controversy quickly evaporated. In the words of Scruggs, "It has become something of a shrine."\[8\]

**Women's memorial**

The original winning entry of the Women's Memorial design contest was deemed unsuitable. Glenna Goodacre's entry received an honorable mention in the contest and she was asked to submit a modified maquette (design model). Goodacre's original design for the Women's Memorial statue included a standing figure of a nurse holding a Vietnamese baby, which although not intended as such, was deemed a political statement, and it was asked that this be removed. She replaced them with a figure of a kneeling woman holding an empty helmet.
Traveling replicas

The Moving Wall

Vietnam veteran John Devitt of Stockton, California, attended the 1982 dedication ceremonies of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Recognizing what he saw as the healing nature of the Wall, he vowed to make a transportable version of the Wall, a "Traveling Wall" so those who were not able to travel to Washington, D.C. would be able to see and touch the names of friends or loved ones in their own hometown.

Using personal finances, Devitt founded Vietnam Combat Veterans, Ltd. With the help of friends, the half-size replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, named The Moving Wall,[10] was built and first put on display to the public in Tyler, Texas, in 1984.

The Moving Wall visits hundreds of small towns and cities throughout the U.S., staying five or six days at each site. Local arrangements for each visit are made months in advance by veterans organizations and other civic groups. Thousands of people all over the US volunteered their time and money to help honor the fallen.

Desire for a hometown visit of The Moving Wall was so high the waiting list became very long. Vietnam Combat Veterans built a second structure of The Moving Wall. A third structure was added in 1989. In 2001, one of the structures was retired due to wear.

By 2006, there had been more than 1000 hometown visits of The Moving Wall. The count of people who visited The Moving Wall at each display ranges from 5,000 to more than 50,000; the total estimate of visitors is in the tens of millions.

As the wall moves from town to town on interstates, it is often escorted by state troopers and up to thousands of local citizens on motorcycles. Many of these are Patriot Guard Riders, who consider escorting The Moving Wall to be a "special mission", which is coordinated on their website. As it passes towns, even when it is not planning a stop in those towns, local veterans organizations sometimes plan for local citizens to gather by the highway and across overpasses to wave flags and salute the Wall.[10]

The Wall That Heals

The Wall That Heals is a traveling half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial started in 1996 by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. A 53-foot tractor-trailer transports the 250-foot wall and converts to a museum at each stop, showing letters and other items left at the original wall, and more details about those whose names are shown. Lisa Gough of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund said that the exhibit goes to around 20 cities each year and traveled 33,534 miles in 2010. Organizations in each location pay $5,000 of the cost, with national sponsors paying the rest. Gough says seeing the wall is "emotional" for veterans and seeing it in the "comfort and security of their own hometown" can be helpful.[11]
Wildwoods Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall
Located across Ocean Avenue from the Wildwoods Convention Center, New Jersey, the memorial was unveiled and
dedicated on May 29, 2010. The memorial wall is a half-size granite replica of the Vietnam Memorial in
Washington, D.C., and the only permanent memorial in the Northeast, other than the Memorial in the National's
Capital.

As a Memorial Genre
The first US memorial to an ongoing war, the Northwood Gratitude and Honor Memorial in Irvine, CA, is modelled
on the Vietnam Veterans memorial in that it includes a chronological list of the dead engraved in dark granite. As the
memorialized wars (in Iraq and Afghanistan) have not concluded, the Northwood Gratitude and Honor Memorial
will be up dated yearly. It has space for about 8000 names, of which 5,714 were engraved as of the Dedication of the
Memorial on November 14, 2010.[12][13]

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection
Visitors to the memorial began leaving sentimental items at the memorial at its opening. One story claims that this
practice began during construction, when a Vietnam veteran threw the Purple Heart his brother received
posthumously into the concrete of the memorial's foundation.[14] Several thousand items are left at the memorial
each year.

Items left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial are collected by National Park Service employees and transferred to the
NPS Museum and Resource Center, which catalogs and stores all items except perishable organic matter (such as
live flowers) and unaltered US flags. The flags are redistributed through various channels.[15]

The largest item left at the memorial was a sliding glass storm door with a full-size replica "tiger cage". The door
was painted with a scene in Vietnam and the names of US POWs and MIAs from the conflict.[14]

Other items in collection include a Harley-Davidson motorcycle with the license plate HERO, a plain brown teddy
bear which was dressed by other unconnected visitors, a 6' abstract sculpture titled "After the Holocaust", and an
experimental W. R. Case "jungle survival knife" of which only 144 were made. It also contains the Medal of Honor
of Angelo Liteky, who renounced it in 1986 by placing the medal at the memorial in an envelope addressed to
then-President Ronald Reagan.

From 1992 to 2003, selected items from the collection were placed on exhibit, at the Smithsonian Institution's
National Museum of American History as "Personal Legacy: The Healing of a Nation".

Vandalism
There have been three known incidents of vandalism at the memorial wall in its 28-year existence.

The first occurred in 1988, when a swastika and various scratches were found etched in two of the panels.[16] The
panels were replaced.

In 1993, someone burned one of the directory stands at the entrance to the memorial.[17]

On September 7, 2007, an oily substance was found by park rangers on the memorial's wall panels and paving
stones. It was spread over an area of 50 to 60 feet (18 m). Memorial Fund founder Jan Scruggs deplored the scene
calling it an "act of vandalism on one of America's sacred places". The removal process took a few weeks to
complete.[17]
Notes

[12] northwoodmemorial.com

References

- Vietnam Veterans Memorial, National Park Service leaflet, GPO:2004—304—377/00203

Further reading


### External links

- Official NPS website: Vietnam Veterans Memorial (http://www.nps.gov/vive/)
- C-span video: 1982 dedication ceremony (http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/WarMemoria)
- The Virtual Wall (TM) (http://www.VirtualWall.org)
- View The Wall (http://www.viewthewall.com)
- Maya Ying Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial proposal at the Library of Congress (http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm022.html)
- The Moving Wall (TM) (http://www.themovingwall.org/)
- Vietnam Veterans Wall South in Pensacola, FL (aka 'The Wall South') (http://www.pensacolawallsouth.org/)
- Photo essay: Valentine's Day at the U.S. Viet Nam War Memorial (Wikinews article)
• Maya Lin article in Seattle Weekly (http://www.seattleweekly.com/arts/0604/springarts-maya.php)
• Bringing Home the Wall (http://www.bringinghomethewall.com)
• The Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Wall-USA) website (http://thewall-usa.com/)
• Photos of the Wall at "Sites of Memory" (http://sites-of-memory.de/main/DCvietnam.html)
• Army Medical Statistics (http://www.1stcavmedic.com/stats1.htm)
• Vietnam Veterans of America (http://www.vva.org/)
• The Merry Prankster (http://www.miafacts.org/prankster.htm), chapter 12 of Prisoners of Hope by Susan Katz Keating, describing actions by Ted Sampley
• History of the Wall (http://www.aiipowmia.com/histories/histwall.html) at aiipowmia.com, a group involved with the POW-MIA controversy.
• NW Veterans — Vietnam's Women (http://members.aol.com/bear317b/sister12.htm)
• Online version of the Washington D.C. Memorial (http://tanaya.net/vmw/)
• Photo Collection of Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC (http://www.dcphototour.com/WashingtonDCMemorialPhotoTour/Vietnam_Veterans_Memorial.shtml)
• A Wall As Witness (http://www.awallaswitness.com/) Documentary about how the Wall is both a Wall of Healing and a Wall that holds many heartaches. Features interviews by Special Assistant to the Director of the POW/MIA Office at the Department of Defense, Adrian Cronauer; Gold Star Mother, Ann Sherman Wolcott; Rolling Thunder Founder, Artie Muller; and the most decorated Vietnam Veteran, David Christian.
• Interactive Vietnam Veterans Memorial (http://go.footnote.com/thewall/) Leave a tribute, a story or photograph about any of the 58,256 veterans killed.
• Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument, Coronado California (http://www.vummf.org/)
• Prayer at 1982 dedication ceremony.
Vietnam Veterans Memorial
License: Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Engbush, Wapcaplet

License: Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Unported
Credit: Hu Taoja

License: Public Domain
Credit: Hu Taoja

License: GNU Free Documentation License
Credit: user:Kkmd

License: GNU Free Documentation License
Credit: Downtownblue, Dr who1975, DragonflySixtyseven, Droll, Durova, Eoghanacht, Erictj, Everything counts, Evil Monkey, Falcon4196, License: GNU Free Documentation License
Credit: user:Kkmd

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Meutia Chaerani - Indradi Soemardjan

License: GNU Free Documentation License
Credit: Hu Taoja

License: GNU Free Documentation License
Credit: Hu Taoja

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Meutia Chaerani - Indradi Soemardjan

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa

License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported
Credit: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 By-sa