

WARRIORS REMEMBERED

VIETNAM VETERANS — WELCOME HOME



ALBERT J NAHAS

For years after the end of the war, the Vietnam veterans' quest for recognition for their service and the sacrifice of their fallen comrades went mostly unheeded. Recognition finally began, led most often by their own brothers in arms. In a tremendous personal undertaking of excellent photography and story telling, Albert Nahas has completed an astonishing collection of one hundred of the resulting memorials. The last line of his poem says it all, "*We asked for no reward except a nation's thanks.*" This Vietnam veteran has made it his personal mission to bring that "Thank you for your service" to every veteran. Like the memorials themselves, *Warriors Remembered* is a long overdue Welcome Home for all Vietnam veterans.

— **H. Ross Perot**

Every memorial is unique and has its own unique story. Years of research have given Albert Nahas a perspective to make each memorial come to life with details and anecdotes most visitors would not uncover on their own. Excellent work for *all* war veterans.

— **Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore USA (Ret.) and Joseph L. Galloway**

Authors of *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young* and
We Are Soldiers Still: A Journey Back to the Battlefields of Vietnam

More than the story of memorials and their history, *Warriors Remembered* documents the struggle of a generation of veterans to recognize the sacrifice of their comrades when the country would not. In the process, they began to heal the Nation from its most divisive modern war. With passion and perseverance, Albert Nahas has captured the resulting beauty and national impact of these memorials. *Warriors Remembered* is a book that is long overdue and a must read for any veteran.

— **General Barry R. McCaffrey, USA (Ret.)**

I strongly encourage any one with an interest in the Vietnam War and its aftermath to read this very moving and inspiring book. Our society finally began to remember the soldiers of the Vietnam War. *Warriors Remembered* captures the memorials, their stories and the feelings of that period in an exceptional manner.

— **Jan C. Scruggs**, Founder and President
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund

In the 1970s, political condemnations of the Vietnam War too often spilled over onto Vietnam veterans. But as *Warriors Remembered* vividly tells and shows, the American people have never forgotten the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform, even in a war so politically unpopular. Truly a splendid book.

— **Tom Carhart**, author of *Sacred Ties*

Albert Nahas has persisted on a journey that has taken years and thousands of miles in order to compile the material for *Warriors Remembered*. His stories and photographs will inspire any veteran and are a special gift to Vietnam veterans. *Warriors Remembered* is a treasure for anyone who has seen war or been affected by it. You can tell it is written by a warrior who has "been there".

— **John Wheeler**, Founding Chairman
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund

WARRIORS
REMEMBERED

VIETNAM VETERANS — WELCOME HOME

ALBERT J NAHAS

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DEDICATION

*To all American Warriors, male and female,
who have and continue to proudly serve our nation,
and to the author's 29 West Point classmates
who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.*



West Point Class of 1967 Crest

Herbert Hall, 698 Mills Road
West Point, New York



American Soldier

Mills Road
West Point, New York
Sculptor: Felix de Weldon (Also created the *Iwo Jima Monument* in Arlington National Cemetery)

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PREFACE

This journey began as an attempt to document the recognition that proudly stands throughout our country for veterans of the Vietnam War. The journey began and ended with tears. I am not able to turn these pages without remembering the emotion that accompanied the telling, the hearing, and the writing of each story. Healing is not an event; it is a continuous process. More than I ever would have realized or certainly ever admitted, the travel, interviews, photographs, and especially the writing of the stories that make up *Warriors Remembered* were a healing process for me – a process I never knew I needed.

These memorials are for the dead, but more so for the living. No one should ever discount the value of these memorials not only as a tribute to the fallen, but also as a quiet, gracious, heartfelt, and lasting thank you to the families affected. Those mothers and fathers, children and every lover of a warrior who had their greatest treasure taken from them, can trace his or her name on a wall or plaque and know that we are thankful for their sacrifice. We know of their loss and we will never forget. Even more so for those who still wait for an accounting for those who never returned – that name on the wall may be their only place to mourn.

And no one should ever discount the value of these memorials as a tribute for the surviving warriors. As they visit these places of reflection, there should be no feeling of guilt that they survived when others did not. God works in His own way. Each of us is taken or spared for His purpose, often forever hidden in its meaning, but a purpose we should never doubt. We are called each day to honor with our lives the sacrifice of those who gave theirs.

These memorials have also helped to heal a nation torn by a most divisive war. They helped to mark an end to the debate of the war's motives and methods, and an end to placing the war's burden on those who answered the call to fight it. The celebrations that accompanied the memorial dedications were equally a nation's embrace of its warriors for the duty they had performed and recognition of their sacrifice.

Three memorials prompted me to begin the journey. The first was the emotional response I felt when I first saw *Wings of an Eagle*, the soldier being lifted from the battlefield by a fatherly angel in Missoula, Montana. The second was the rain-streaked anguished

face of the Marine in *Hill 881 South* in San Antonio, Texas. The third was the *Peace and Brotherhood Chapel* in Angel Fire, New Mexico, reflecting a family's love for their fallen warrior. Had it not been for the dedicated work of Bill McBride and his platoon who have maintained *www.Vietvet.org* since 1994, I never would have realized the magnitude of the recognition that has been paid to veterans of this war. His virtual tour of these memorials encouraged me to see them for myself and to share them with other veterans and their families.

This book is long overdue. I dreamed of completing it within a few years of my first photo trip in 2002, but earning a living sometimes got in the way. Finally, I quit work on everything else when I realized that fewer than thirty-five percent of the combat veterans of Vietnam were still alive to see it. The book represents over six years of effort over the intervening eight years.

There is so much more of this journey that I would like to include, but time simply will not allow it. There are the many wartime stories from the great veterans I met. And there are accounts from vets and non-vets alike who have poured their heart and soul into these places of remembrance for their buddies still living, though changed, or those lost to us forever with their sacrifice. They are the heroes of this book. Their drive and determination to complete these memorials, very often in the face of apathy or outright stereotypical discrimination, showed a courage and conviction equal to their performance in battle. They devoted years of their lives to creating these places of remembrance. Without their effort and success there would be no *Warriors Remembered*.

There are also the stories of the strongest souls of all, the Gold Star Families whose sons or daughters, husbands and fathers were taken from them long before their time. As a soldier of many years, I mourn the loss of such great potential when our youth are lost in war.

My drive to complete this journey was motivated mostly by a desire to spread the news of these often little-known places of quiet remembrance. They are everywhere, though many are unknown except to those in close proximity or those who participated in their creation. Perhaps it is time for a journey of your own. Go at dusk or in the sunrise when no one is there except the spirit of your brothers. Visit and let your healing continue.

Welcome Home! Thank you for your service and your sacrifice!

This book would never have been completed without my wife, Carolyn, who deserves a medal for her patience and support. For many years she has seen our lives change as we pursued interviews, historical information, and those elusive photographic moments for this labor.

The editing assistance of Jimmy Rogers and Patricia Rudawski were invaluable. Both volunteered without realizing the duration of the challenge to which they were committing. Jimmy, the sister of a Vietnam veteran and wife of a Vietnam veteran Merchant Mariner, volunteered as photo editor. With painstaking attention to detail, she helped to make this amateur photographer's images appear more professional. Patricia, an Army brat whose two brothers both served in Vietnam, volunteered to help with research and to edit stories, ensuring consistent use of language, grammar, punctuation, and formats. She often clarified my thoughts and reminded me to add to the Glossary those terms that no one but a Vietnam veteran might know. Without their presence on the team and their constant encouragement, we could not have reached the finish line. I certainly would have failed without their help.

Another volunteer was Melissa Kean who brought with her professional editing skills. More importantly her fresh eyes helped find errors we had read too many times to recognize.

Thanks also to IBJ Book Publishing for their significant assistance with layout and their expertise in producing this book as well as their patience with our work in progress.

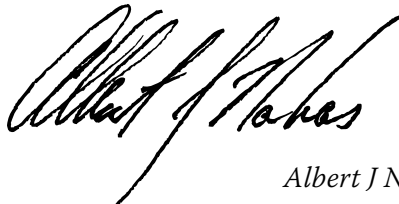
Special thanks to the photographers who are acknowledged in certain stories. Some memorials were significantly changed since my photographs or sites were under renovation during my visit. I appreciate the time and attention these individuals contributed to

this cause. Though almost all the photos contained here are my own, sometimes the weather simply would not cooperate or others had the advantage of an aerial view.

And many thanks to Justin Cremer and Matt Register, two much younger Army veterans of later eras and wars. They took an interest in this project and organized an internet marketing campaign to better reach their generation, the sons and daughters of the Vietnam veterans acknowledged in this book. Their assistance will help reveal these historical sites and stories to an entirely new audience.

A final thank you to Charlie Brown, Veteran Services Officer in Missoula, Montana, who introduced me to the *Wings of an Eagle* and encouraged me frequently to complete this work. He represents every veteran who has sacrificed for years to honor their brothers.

On our travels and in our research we have discovered over 1,000 Vietnam veterans memorials in the United States. I am certain there are at least that many more that we did not find. I encourage anyone who discovers their memorial missing from the list on www.warriorsremembered.com to submit a description and photographs to help complete the list. These memorials are a national treasure that should be cataloged and maintained. A portion of the proceeds of this book will be sent to committees or groups who still maintain memorials without government or endowment sponsorship. WR



Albert J Nahas

INTRODUCTION

Just as the Vietnam War was a different war, its memorials differ in nearly every respect from those of the past. They are a reflection of the war itself – small unit actions conducted independently without the knowledge or support of efforts taking place often only miles away. The memorials reveal a personal more than a national pride – recognition of duty performed, of personal mission accomplished. They are an outpouring of emotion for the magnitude of our loss and also recognition of the spirit of those who survived the war. Rather than a nation's thanks, these memorials are most often a tribute by Vietnam veterans for Vietnam veterans.

There are likely over 2,500 Vietnam veterans memorials in the country. If you count every dedicated highway or bridge there are certainly even more. Memorials at county courthouses for WWI, WWII, and Korea were often expanded with a panel for Vietnam, listing those from the area who were lost. Schools created plaques for their lost alumni. But these memorials, created locally, were often only known locally. State memorials, especially those at some distance from the Capitol grounds, often went unknown or forgotten even by residents of the state.

Warriors Remembered was written for the sole purpose of bringing these memorials to light. From over 1,000 located during a span of eight years, the book highlights almost one hundred memorials, including at least one from each state. Others that were emotionally compelling or unique were also selected. By publicizing their photos and stories, it is my hope that others will stop in their travels to visit these memorials. Their stories reflect the struggles that Vietnam veterans, families, and friends endured to create them. Each story is also meant as a tour guide, highlighting details a visitor might miss and helping to bring the memorial to life.

Just as this war was different, so too are its memorials. Here you will find no white granite generals or parade ground uniforms, no commemoration of battles and campaigns or victories of the conflict. Rather these memorials include names of the fallen engraved on black granite, dark bronze fighting men, or the wounded and the nurses who cared for them. Often they reflect the anguish of war and its aftermath. They represent all services and are a tribute to every warrior – every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, Coastguardsman, and especially to the prisoners and those still missing. Many portray the Grunt, symbolizing this war just as the Doughboy had for WWI, the GI for WWII, and the winter-clothed warrior for Korea. Here again the difference is striking. The Doughboy is typically portrayed

in white granite, in full uniform ready to enter the battle or begin the campaign. The Grunt is most often portrayed in dark bronze in the sweat and dirt of combat, with his uniform adapted to both the heat of Vietnam and the heat of battle. And it was the Grunts who most often led the effort to build the memorials.

As this war progressed, individual replacements were sent to join units already in combat rather than training and deploying units into action. The individual names of the lost and missing are prominent on most memorials and they reflect the personal struggles faced by many during combat and after their return. Often the names are listed chronologically, allowing visitors to find inscribed together those who fought and died together.

The war's individual nature is also echoed in the memorials. There are differing dates for the war and even the country's name is spelled in several different ways. Start dates earlier or later than the Gulf of Tonkin incident (August 2-4, 1964) either reflect the first casualty on a particular memorial or perhaps the first deployment of advisors (1959) or combat units (1965) to the theater. Some memorials record the date of their last casualty or the final withdrawal of combat forces (1973), but most use the fall of Saigon (April 30, 1975) as the war's end date. At least one site uses May 7, 1975 which was the declared end of the war. It was not until the early 1980s that veterans seemed to settle on a single-word spelling of Vietnam.

Also prominent in Vietnam veterans memorials is the recognition of the role of women. It would be cynical to attribute this to the strength of the women's movement in the early 1980s. It is rather recognition of the unique nature of this conflict, the expanded role of women in both military and civilian support roles, and their significant proximity to the actual fighting, which sometimes also made them casualties. Even more, it is recognition of the respect and warrior status shown them by their brothers in arms. This is especially true for the nurses who kept many of us alive.

Perhaps never in our past has so much national attention been paid to those who are still missing. During earlier wars, technology and information gaps made accounting for the missing significantly more difficult and though no less painful, perhaps forced an inevitable acceptance of their unknown fate. The irony of Vietnam was that even with dispersed units in the conflict, our advanced technology and media coverage made the lack of information about the fate of the missing even more difficult to accept. Like the war, the Vietnam POW/MIA remembrance movement generated strong opinions,

especially when discussing the fate of those known to have been captured. But their remembrance became an integral part of many memorials, including recognition of the flag adopted to represent this cause.

Many Vietnam veteran memorials were created in a climate of adversity at home that was all too reminiscent of similar challenges faced by veterans during the war and during their return. Funding, location, and design were the most common hurdles. The political conflicts that marked the war lingered years later to impede the efforts of memorial committees. Memorial creators often faced lack of support or open opposition from communities where they were attempting to honor lost sons, from established veterans groups and even from other Vietnam veterans. Many Vietnam veterans questioned spending money on memorials rather than on programs for returning warriors who needed a boost to adjust to civilian life. Memorial committee motives and objectives were questioned, as were the impacts on the community, land use, traffic, or why this war's memorials should have priority over memorials for earlier wars. Almost universally, community leaders less wedded to past political debates on the war stepped forward to break bureaucratic logjams. Many memorials were built entirely with private funds; some received significant corporate sponsorship, often from corporations headed by Vietnam veterans. Coors Brewing Company contributed substantial sums to many memorials in the West and Miller Brewing Company did the same in the Midwest, but many major corporations that had profited greatly from the war often refused to participate in the recognition of its warriors. Some committees were able to obtain public funds, especially for state memorials or from legislation sponsored by veterans.

City planners, architectural or fine arts commissions, and legislative bodies proved to be either significant obstacles or blessed allies in gaining site approval. Loud voices often questioned approval of prominent locations, preferring instead to hide the memorial for a war they did not want to remember. In each case, the drive of the veterans memorial committee determined the duration of the struggle and became the difference between success and failure. Design choices were also a struggle faced by memorial committees. As can be seen by the great variety of memorial designs, these struggles added even more emotion to the final remembrance. Again different from other wars, almost all Vietnam veterans memorials were built for Vietnam veterans by Vietnam veterans. They show the bond among warriors that extends beyond the war and beyond the grave. They confirm the willingness of these veterans to sacrifice years to ensure recognition for their comrades, even when the Nation would not.

The inception of Vietnam veterans memorials can be divided into two distinct time periods. Most early memorials, those prior to 1982,

grew from a sense of community in individual towns, from the efforts of traditional groups such as Gold Star Mothers or from groups of Vietnam veterans compelled to no longer let their brothers go without recognition. Fewer than twenty percent of the memorials located during this journey fall into this group. Local community memorial efforts continued after 1982, but national events became a catalyst for broader action seven years after the end of the war.

On January 20, 1981, the remaining fifty-two hostages (of the original sixty-six) held for 444 days in Iran returned home. They came home as heroes, with news media praise, parades, and welcome ceremonies. Though deserved, their recognition prompted many who had served in Vietnam to remember the less than positive reception they had received during their return home. Plans were already underway for a memorial in Washington, D.C., but the visible contrast of this Welcome Home to veterans' memories of none spurred even more aggressive action to complete The Wall. The Wall was dedicated on Veterans Day, November 11, 1982, with a parade and ceremony attended by thousands of veterans from across the United States. Many of them returned home determined to create local recognition for Vietnam casualties and veterans of their own communities.

The Moving Wall was conceived by John Devitt from a similar realization that many of the three-and-a-half million veterans of Southeast Asia would never see The Wall. Since 1984, the Moving Wall has traveled to fifty states, visiting over 1,500 communities. Its visits brought veterans together in each community, often for the first time, energizing them with a bond and a mission reminiscent of the determination that had allowed them to survive the war. It is difficult to overemphasize the impact of these visits in stirring Vietnam veterans into action to memorialize the sacrifice of their comrades and their own service. Over eighty percent of the memorials that I have been able to document were dedicated after 1982. Most trace their inception to watching the Iran hostages return, the dedication of The Wall, or a visit of the Moving Wall to their community.

Though most often led by veterans themselves, each memorial campaign also prompted healing of the Nation's war wounds. As memorial campaigns progressed, community support increased and the image of Vietnam veterans improved as they gained recognition as dedicated, responsible, and successful contributors to society. These memorials also awakened movements to recognize veterans of other wars. This was especially true of Korean War veterans, who now saw their younger brothers lead the way in recognizing their fallen comrades. Veterans' parks, including designated space for memorials representing past or future wars, were often the result.

The memorials and the bonding of communities with their veterans also awakened recognition for younger veterans of current wars and this book is also written for them. It is meant to encourage

new generations of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan to complete their service before they turn to other endeavors. It is all too easy to return home and be absorbed into a nation that has forgotten that we are still at war. It will be all too easy to let the memory of your fallen comrades fade. You have fought well and bravely and your country has acknowledged your sacrifice, but we are a nation of short memory. Fight one more battle before you rest or move on. Ask for space next to that of your father's generation and build your own memorials to those who fought bravely in a war where once again our nation seems to be losing its resolve and focus. Forget the politics. Anchor forever in your community the memory of your fallen comrades and those who have returned forever changed.

The legacy of Vietnam continues in both positive and negative ways. One very positive legacy is that the politics of current wars has been divorced from the warriors. Fallen warriors are buried with flag-draped processions, honor, and dignity. They are often escorted by veteran motorcycle clubs, often mostly Vietnam veterans, not only as an honor guard, but as security against those who might disrupt the family's mourning. Returning warriors are applauded in airports and hometowns even by those who no longer support the conflict. They are almost universally greeted with Welcome Home ceremonies. Media outlets refer to them as heroes and citizens routinely detour to shake their hand and thank returning veterans. Warriors are thanked for their service and sacrifice, rather than being blamed for division that might exist on the validity of the war.

The Vietnam legacy has also changed military policy. While every war requires some individual replacements, lessons learned in Vietnam changed how the military deployed to fight current conflicts. Units that have trained together, deploy together, fight together, return together, support their families together, and support each other after they return. Our military has relearned the age-old lesson that unit cohesion is a combat multiplier, making all units more effective than the sum of their individual warriors. And the isolation felt by many Vietnam veterans, who to avoid recognition discarded their uniforms alone in unfamiliar airport restrooms, has been replaced with charter flights home for units and warm receptions. These veterans still return changed, as are all who have seen war, but there is a greater effort to help with their integration into and acceptance by society and to heal the wounds they may still suffer.

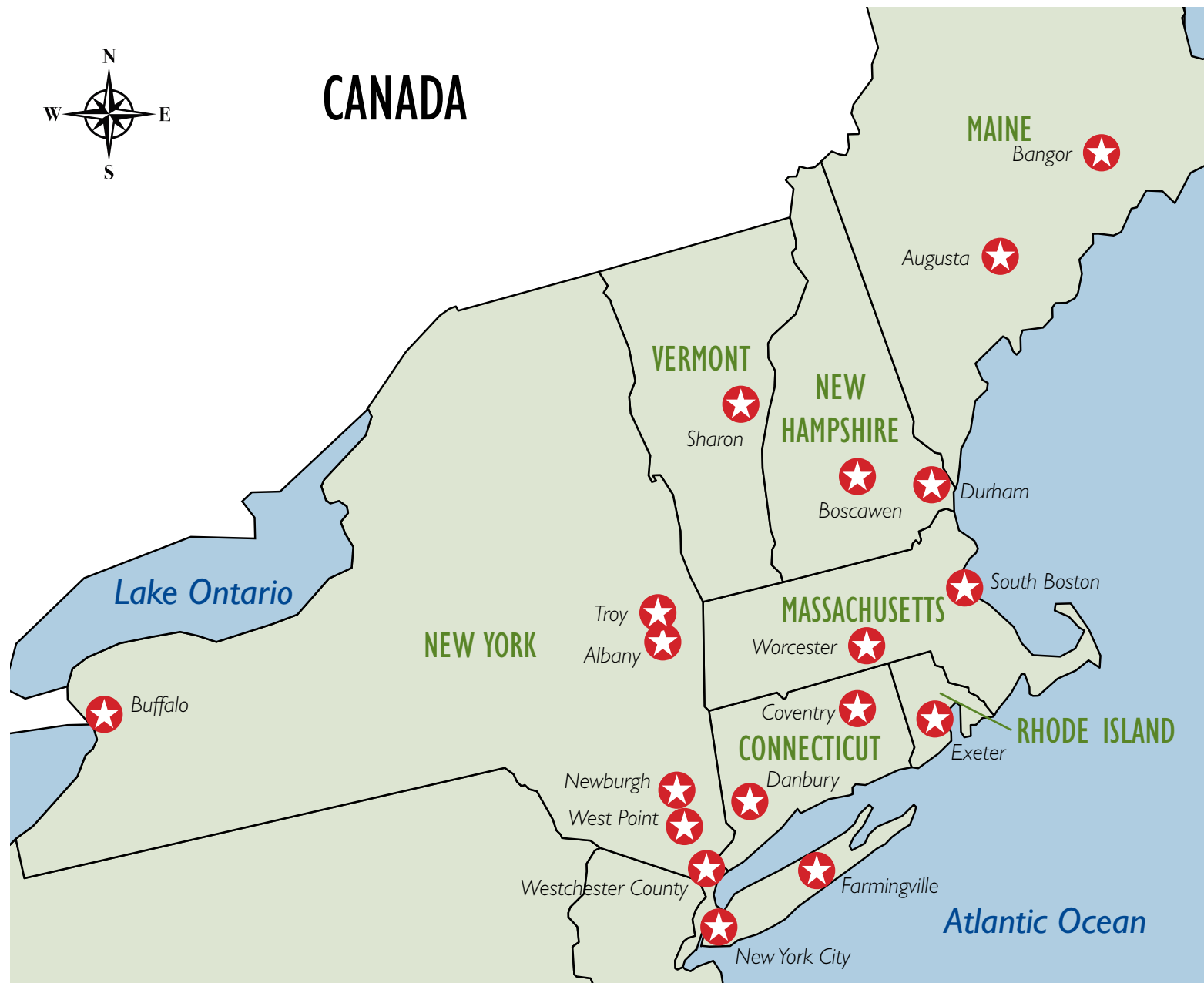
One lesson on which our nation needs more work is how to realistically assess the outcomes and attainable objectives of a potential conflict before committing our youth to battle. Even with a disproportionate military advantage, shock and awe will never win

campaigns without putting boots on the ground. Underestimating the number of boots needed will always prolong a conflict and often result in indecisive outcomes. We also still fail to understand that the patience of the American people is limited. Our enemy learned this limitation in Vietnam and every enemy who grinds us to stalemate reinforces the lesson. Our nation's credibility is at stake and we possess the power of many options. We should be smart enough to use options short of combat before we commit to the always more costly alternative of sending our youth to war. We should choose a combat option only when decisive outcomes can be assured. Then we must commit decisive force from the outset to guarantee a successful outcome in short order or mission success will be in doubt.

One note of apology. As a one-man research department, photographer, and writer for most of this journey, there is a limit to the thoroughness of this effort. The most difficult part of the quest was to locate priority memorials to visit and to find the people who had created them. Their stories were critical to making the book meaningful. In the eight years since the journey began, many Vietnam veterans memorials were created and many more are still being built. Traveling over 35,000 miles on my own time and without sponsorship, I am sure that I missed some very significant memorials. I intentionally avoided even beautiful memorials that did not specifically refer to Vietnam. One war is all I could cover and one trip was generally all I could afford. This was never meant to be a definitive work on "the best" memorials. Every memorial is best for those who built it and those honored by it. It was instead my goal to show a sample of those that touched me most, hoping they would also touch others. My apologies to anyone who feels slighted because their memorial is not included.

I hope these photos and stories are the beginning of your own journey. If you are a veteran, Welcome Home and thank you for your service. Let each visit to a memorial fill you with pride that others have remembered and thanked you for your service and that of your brothers. I hope you feel the emotion of this book and of the memorials you visit. Let your emotions flow. And if you are the loved one of a veteran, my wish is that this book will become a catalyst for conversation – for quality time spent with your veteran listening to stories that have shaped his life, but that he felt you would not understand. All too soon we will be gone and so too will the opportunity to profit from hearing the struggles that we faced or the memories we have of those with whom we will always have a bond. Encourage your veteran to bring that legacy into the light. Learn from it so you can keep it alive. **WR**

NORTHEAST



MAINE — Augusta and Bangor 2

NEW HAMPSHIRE — Durham (UNH) 4, Boscawen 6

VERMONT — Sharon 8

MASSACHUSETTS — Worcester 10, South Boston 12

RHODE ISLAND — Exeter 14

CONNECTICUT — Coventry 16, Danbury 18

NEW YORK — Albany 20, County Memorials of New York 22, West Point 24,
Westchester County 26, New York City 28

VERMONT VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

Sharon, Vermont • Dedicated October 30, 1982; August 20, 2005



*That these dead shall not have died in vain;
That this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom;
And that this government of the people,
by the people, for the people
Shall not perish from the earth.*

Lincoln's words are engraved on what is likely the first state-approved Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This unadorned granite monument, reflecting the rugged individualism and strong patriotism of Vermont, stands in silent watch at the Sharon rest stop on I-89. Looking south from there, the beauty of the valley resembles Highway One in Vietnam's Central Highlands.

The mid-1970s saw the establishment in Vermont of the Project to Advance Veterans' Education (PAVE). PAVE's goals were to keep veterans in school, assist them with employment and health issues, and help secure upgraded discharges. In December 1979, this outreach led to the establishment in Rutland of Chapter 1 of Vietnam Veterans of America. By 1981 the idea for a memorial for fallen comrades began to surface. Montpelier, the state capital, was a natural choice, but the beauty and accessibility of Sharon led to acceptance of this rest stop as a better location. An approved site, the donation of a consensus-choice monument, and state approval in early 1982, resulted in a dedication two weeks prior to the dedication of The Wall in Washington, D.C.

In 1995, driven by budget necessities, the Vermont legislature sought to close all highway rest stops, but an outcry from the veterans' community succeeded in permanently preserving the one at Sharon. The culmination of a long-held dream came true in 2005 with the rededication of the memorial at a new welcome center there. That same tall granite is now protected by interlocking river rock walls partially encircled by five service flags and the flag of Vermont. Imbedded in the walls are 138 marble outcroppings, candle holders for annual Memorial Day Eve vigils for those Vermonters killed or missing during the war. An eternal flame marks the memorial entrance. The welcome center has become a destination dedicated to the history of the Vietnam War and those who fought it. Over 7,200 names of Vermont Vietnam veterans are listed on the center's *Honor Roll Column* and timelines track concurrent events from Vietnam, Vermont and U.S. history. The center incorporates green geothermal heating and cooling and its greenhouse, filled with Asian plants typical of Vietnam, helps filter and recycle waste water.

Vermont has also led with the **Vermont Patriots Medal** for “the next of kin of each Vermont serviceman whose life is given in an armed conflict”. Authorized in 1966 for families of those killed in Vietnam, the medal was never funded and nearly forgotten. Rediscovered thirty years later, an amended bill made funds available for the medal and it was first presented to Vietnam veteran surviving families on September 21, 1996. The bill has since been amended to include the families of Vermonters killed in all wars.

Legend: I-89 is the “road less traveled” by Vietnam veterans, the most direct route from the Northeast Seaboard to Canada. Some veterans hold to the legend that this site was chosen 138 miles from the border so the memorial’s 138 names would be plainly visible to draft evaders returning from Canada down I-89 Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway and across Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge into New Hampshire. **WR**

Acknowledgements: Vietnam veterans: John Miner, Army, founder of VVA Chapter 601, State Veterans Council President and VVA National Board member; Rick Weidman, PAVE Chairman, VVA Executive Director for Policy/Government Affairs

Location: I-89 northbound welcome center south of Sharon

Artists: Architect: Tim Smith & Associates, Bennington, Vermont; Monument donation: Barre Granite Company



MASSACHUSETTS VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

Worcester, Massachusetts • Dedicated June 9, 2002



Author's note: *First seen on a late fall evening just before twilight, the majesty and silence of the large duck pond, landscaped gardens, and wooded shore in autumn colors contrast with the struggle of the lost warriors remembered there. Returning for early morning light, the memorial was blanketed by the season's first snow only adding to its beauty and serenity.*

The Massachusetts Vietnam Veterans Memorial covers four-and-a-third acres in Green Hill Park. Ten gray, rough-cut Vermont granite monoliths stand watch over Hermitage Pond with its circumferential walking path. Tucked in the woods on the far south shore, six of these form the **Place of Names**. Surrounding a small fountain with its “flow of life”

they are inscribed with the names of the 1,545 Massachusetts sons and one daughter lost or missing in the war. Closer to the memorial entrance, emerging from the pond itself are four monoliths of the **Place of Words** inscribed with thirteen letters home from those lost in the conflict. The **Place of Flags** at the entrance arboretum displays the U.S., Massachusetts, and POW/MIA flags and leads to landscaped gardens inviting remembrance of the fallen. Viewed in any season, the unique harmony of the architect's design with the memorial's natural surroundings contrast the beauty of nature with the realities of the cost of war.

More than fifteen years in the making, the Massachusetts Vietnam Veterans Memorial effort originally began in Boston with a vision of using only private funds “to establish a permanent tribute to those



Massachusetts citizens who answered the call of their country, and made the supreme sacrifice in the name of freedom and democracy during the Vietnam conflict (1955-1975)". Planned near the Korean War Memorial at the Charleston Navy Yard, the project foundered. A spinoff group in central Massachusetts picked up the challenge of creating a memorial. They secured a site donated by the City of Worcester in Green Hill Park and conducted a design competition in 1989 to create a memorial consistent with the park's beauty, but again for nearly a decade the project stalled for lack of funds.

Finally in 1999, the Massachusetts Vietnam Veterans Memorial (MVVM) Committee was formed under the supervision of the Department of Veteran's Services, headed by Thomas Kelley, a Navy Vietnam veteran and Medal of Honor recipient. With this state sponsorship, the Commonwealth agreed to a generous grant which, combined with existing corporate and private donations, was sufficient to complete the memorial. One noteworthy gift from the local Lowe's was for 90,000 annuals blooming in time for the memorial dedication.

Committee Chairman Pierce Gould was the high school friend of Chief Gunner Michael Kustigian, reported missing in 1968 from the



USS *Long Beach* off Vietnam. For thirty-four years Michael's mother had worn his MIA bracelet. Early in the morning on March 9, 2002, a small group of veterans at the *Place of Names* watched as she donned a new bracelet from her purse and placed the one she had worn for so long in the foundation of the stone bearing Michael's name, adding her remembrance to the memorial. "Pierce, do you know what day this is?" "I'm sorry I don't," he replied. "Today is Michael's fifty-third birthday." Like so many other stories recalled by those who spearheaded memorial drives, this encounter "made all of the blood, sweat and tears worthwhile" for the veterans present. Each story helps transform the bronze and stone of memorials into a living tribute. **WR**

Acknowledgements: MVVM committee members and Veteran Services Officers Pierce Gould, Army Vietnam veteran and Karen Greenwood, Navy Vietnam era veteran

Location: Green Hill Park; Skyline Drive entrance off Belmont Street (MA 9); off I-290

Artists: Architects: Bill Rogers, Harby, Rogers and Catanzaro, Belmont, Massachusetts

GREATER DANBURY VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

Danbury, Connecticut • Dedicated May 29, 1988



A Marine on a road-clearing mission in Vietnam discovers a bomb that must be blown in place. As often happens, villagers, especially young children, gather in curiosity. The young Marine takes a small girl by the hand and leads her to crouch safely in a ditch as others also clear the area. At the cry of “fire in the hole”, the frightened girl rushes to cling to his chest, burying her head in his flack jacket as the bomb is detonated. The Marine will fight and possibly kill again, but he will never forget the fear and tragedy of children who live in war.

He went to Vietnam in a reconnaissance battalion, which because many of its missions were in enemy territory, sustained very high casualties. Late in his tour, at a local orphanage, he again witnessed not only how children suffer in war, but also how even the toughest

warriors revert to gentleness in the presence of children. These young kids who were now soldiers displayed their hidden compassion that those who “have not been there” might not recognize or credit. The memory stuck.

Returning home, he joined the Marine Corps League where he continued to feel unfulfilled. By 1983, survivor’s guilt and the constant media myth and slander of Vietnam veterans led him on a quest to depict warriors of that conflict in their true light. Never reconciling why he made it home when so many others did not, he devoted the next five years to recognizing the sacrifice of the forty-seven warriors of all services lost from the city and towns of greater Danbury and to honoring their compassion and their dedication.

In 1985, he recruited fellow Marine John Hill to co-chair a small



committee. His concept was a memorial that a veteran of any service would relate to, topped with a different type of statue. WWII Army veteran James Purcell became committee treasurer as funds were solicited from Danbury and the surrounding towns of Bethel, Brookfield, Ridgefield, Newtown, New Fairfield, New Milford and Sherman. Korean War era Navy veteran and Veteran Services Officer Patrick Waldron collected and confirmed the names of those with a significant connection to greater Danbury. The committee decided that those names would be the centerpiece of the base. The map of Vietnam bordered by the five service seals would allow veterans to

explain to their children “this is where I fought”. And the bas-relief on the right combined elements of every service’s wartime effort into a single scene.

Korean War era Navy veteran John Barrows sketched the Marine’s concept for the statue and local sculptor George Koras agreed to deliver the larger-than-life figure with the small child. Only later did he learn the Marine’s story, but he could feel the Marine’s emotion as he constantly visited the statue in progress. Koras tried to capture that emotion in the statue’s eyes. “His eyes show another war is taking place in his heart. The great lesson {of war is to} always remember that we should be human.”

Rogers Park in Danbury was the logical site for the memorial, being both the location of the War Memorial Building dedicated after WWII and the termination of Danbury’s annual Memorial Day parade. Dedication day saw the unveiling of the memorial and also the plaque explaining its hope for recognition of a truer image for Vietnam veterans. It reads in part:

This memorial is dedicated to the Vietnam veteran, his compassion and his humanity. Throughout the Vietnam War American service men and women ... recognized the suffering {of} the Vietnamese people, particularly the children of that country. ... This is the Vietnam veteran who was overlooked. He displayed the same courage as his father and grandfather in other less controversial wars, but more importantly, he displayed the compassion which has always been characteristic of the American people.

Following the dedication, the Danbury Exchange Club hosted a celebration dinner. As in many other cities, the Danbury memorial had stirred the interest of warriors from previous wars. The Vietnam memorial committee presented the city with a \$10,000 check to jumpstart the Korean War veterans’ memorial effort and provided those veterans with copies of their records pointing the way to clear the hurdles they would face. A Veterans Memorial Walkway now connects the two memorials in Rogers Park. **WR**

Acknowledgements: Marine Vietnam veterans: memorial founder Richard Cacace and co-chairman John Hill

Location: Rogers Park, South Street and Main Street

Artists: Sculptor: George Koras