

## **A TRIBUTE AND LEGACY TO THOSE WHO FOUGHT IN THE VIETNAM WAR**

The Vietnam War was fought from 1959 to 1975. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a beautiful and moving tribute as a sacrifice to the women and men who were heroes and who lost their lives in this longest and least most popular war.

The memorial is a healing tribute to the families left behind. Those who lost their lives should not be forgotten. The power of a name is monumental and gives life long credit to their important sacrifice. The number of all the names is astounding. Viewing the names heals the heart and wounds left behind. The names of each have a lot of meaning to their families and loved ones. They all gave their lives for freedom of our country. Acknowledgement of their service and sacrifice is justly deserved.

The Wall was dedicated in 1982. It is located between the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial on the Mall of Washington, D.C. It is quite dramatic for those who have visited. Most are moved beyond words. It consists of two 250-foot walls of polished black granite. The names of each are engraved on the granite. Visitors often touch the names of their loved ones or trace their names on to paper. There are more than 58,000 names of men and women who were killed or who are still missing. And, there are more than 2,000,000 veterans. The Memorial consists of three components; The Wall of Names, The Three Servicemen Statute and Flagpole, and the Vietnam Women's Memorial. Each half of the wall is 246.75 feet long with a combined length of 493.50 feet. Each segment is made of 70 panels. It is privately funded. Approximately \$8.4 million was raised to build the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the 3-Serviceman Statue, and the U.S. flag on the site. The money was raised entirely through contributions from corporations, foundations, unions, veterans, veteran organizations, civic organizations, and more than 275,000 individual Americans. The Wall is the most visited memorial in Washing, D.C.

**The Memorial Wall makes no political statement on the politics or conduct of the war.**

I have two uncles who are veterans of this war. One suffers from the effects of chemicals. They do not speak much of their service. It has deeply affected both. It is still too painful. Death and loss leaves a sharp pain but it does lessen in time and but never quite heals. It leaves a scar. Scars mend but leave a mark. I interviewed one uncle. His name is Leroy Kelly. He suffers from the effects of Agent Orange. His service was from 1968 to 1972. His views of war are mixed. He was very proud to serve our country. However, he was not sure whom we were fighting for. He knew it was a war about communism but felt it was not the best decision the United States ever made. It cost millions of dollars. Some view it as a mistake. But my uncle does not like to think he fought for a "mistake". My uncle feels there was no clear idea what the war was about. That was hard on our soldiers once involved. One thing is certain, he was called to serve and he did so proudly. He does feel the youth of America should be

educated about this war and not ignore it. Important lessons were learned. He does not view it as a mistake for himself. His hope is for world peace and to never be involved in a conflict such as this again.

The effects of war on society are long lasting. Besides death, destruction and loss, poisons were used. Families lost loved ones and some don't know why. Again, an important lesson was learned here. That is, we must stand up for something or fall for everything. The United States learned a valuable lesson in this war, which many view as a mistake, but we cannot turn back time, only learn from the past and honor those we lost.

The healing process continues today and will continue for a long time. Although I have never visited **The Wall**, I have seen pictures and I have relatives engraved on it in addition to two uncles who served. I will see it one day so that I too may remember the sacrifice these service men and country made.

Respectfully Submitted by:  
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