

The Creator's Maya Lin Words:

" . . . This memorial is for those who have died, and for us to remember.

"It was while I was at the site that I designed it. I just sort of visualized it. It just popped into my head. Some people were playing Frisbee. It was a beautiful park. I didn't want to destroy a living park. You use the landscape. You don't fight with it. You absorb the landscape . . . When I looked at the site I just knew I wanted something horizontal that took you in, that made you feel safe within the park, yet at the same time reminding you of the dead.

"Each half of the wall is 246.75 feet long, combined length of 493.50 feet. Each segment is made of 70 panels. At their intersection, the highest point, they are 10.1 feet high; they taper to a width of 8 inches at their extremities. Granite for the wall came from southern India.

"The wall contains 58,175 names (as of October 1990). The largest panels have 137 lines of names; the smallest panels have but one line. There are five names on each line. The names (and other words) on the wall are 0.53 inches high and 0.015 inches deep."

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a national war memorial located in Washington, D.C., that honors members of the U.S. armed forces who had died in service or are unaccounted for during the Vietnam War.

Its construction and related issues have been the source of numerous 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 most recognized part of the memorial.

The main part of the memorial was completed in 1982 and is located in Constitution Gardens adjacent to the National Mall, just northeast of the Lincoln Memorial. The Vietnam Veterans 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 was performed by Datalantic in Atlanta, Ga.

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 three acres near the Lincoln Memorial for 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.

May 6, 1981 - a jury of architects and sculptors (Harry Weese, Richard Hunt, Garret Eckbo, Costantino Nivola, James Rosati, Grady Clay, Hideo Sasaki, Pietro Belluschi and

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.

March 26, 1982 - Ground was formally broken.

November 13, 1982 - Memorial was dedicated after a march to its site by thousands of Vietnam War veterans.

November 1984 - The Three Soldiers statue dedicated.

November 11, 1993 - Vietnam Women's Memorial was 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."

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.

Memorial Wall, designed by Maya Ying Lin, is made up of two black granite walls 246 feet 9 inches long. 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 high, and they taper to a height of eight inches at their extremities. Granite for the wall came from Bangalore, India and was deliberately chosen because of its reflective quality. All cutting and fabrication was done in Barre, Vermont. 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 $125^{\circ} 12'$. Each wall has 72 panels, 70 listing names. 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. Some people leave sentimental items there for their deceased loved ones, and the items are stored at the Museum and Archeological Regional Storage Facility, with the exception of miniature American flags.

A short distance away from the wall is another part of the memorial, a bronze statue named The Three Soldiers (sometimes called The Three Servicemen). The statue was unveiled in 1984 and depicts three soldiers, purposefully identifiable as White American, Black 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 dead comrades. The distance between the two allows them to interact while minimizing the impact of the addition on Lin's design.

The Moving Wall, also known as The Traveling 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 home town.

Using personal finances, John founded Vietnam Combat Veterans, Ltd. With the help of friends, the half-size replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, named The Moving Wall,[2] 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 USA, staying five or six days at each site. Local arrangements for each visit are made months in advance by veteran's 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 long. In 1987, 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. 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.

All nonperishable items left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial—with the exception of miniature American flags—are collected daily and stored at the Museum and Archeological Regional Storage Facility of the National Park Service. A selection of items left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is on display at the American History section of the Smithsonian Institution, just a few blocks away from the Wall.

The flagpole that sits at the opening of the Memorial has the crests of the five branches of service at its base. It is tradition that Marine Corps Vietnam veterans bring brass polish to shine their service's crest, the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor. This is done to show pride in their service. This tradition is not shared by the other branches.