

THE VIETNAM WAR IN MEMORY MEMORIAL, INC.

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members to Vietnam War-related illness.*

In Memory

**The Vietnam War In Memory
Memorial, Inc.**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Persons seeking more information,
or to volunteer, may call or write
Ruth Coder Fitzgerald

Fredericksburg, VA 22401

E-Mail:

There are names that can only be imagined between the lines engraved on the shining black marble panels of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Imagined, for the most part, by surviving family and friends of veterans who attribute the post-war loss of their loved ones to service in Southeast Asia. Among them, a consensus is building that formal recognition will extend the legendary healing quality of the Wall.

PREMATURE DEATHS

Since the war ended, uncounted numbers of Americans who served their country in Vietnam have died prematurely. Typically, these losses are attributed to such causes as Agent Orange-induced cancers and post traumatic stress. Official figures are not kept, according to the Veterans Administration and the Vietnam Veterans of America. Estimates range widely.

Many friends and family of these veterans are seeking to bridge the void they feel at the Wall by establishing a nonprofit corporation, *The Vietnam War In Memory Memorial, Inc.* They hope to gain approval to place a 3x3 foot ground-level plaque near the Memorial to recognize war-related premature deaths.

Retired Naval Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. supports what he terms this "important mission" and serves as a member of the group's advisory board.

Feelings run deep among survivors of the unsung casualties. In Memory gatherings are held in Washington, DC each Veterans Day

and Memorial Day by the longer-established Friends of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Inc. (FVVM).

Family and friends from across the country attend the ceremonies on a knoll overlooking the Memorial. They read the names of their lost and leave certificates of remembrance and artifacts at the Wall, which are then collected, catalogued and stored by the National Park Service.

REMEMBERING VETERANS

The Vietnam War In Memory Memorial project was started independently of the Friends with a letter-writing campaign in June 1995, by Ruth Coder Fitzgerald of Fredericksburg, Virginia. Her brother, John Keath Coder, of Iowa, died in 1992 from non-Hodgkins lymphoma attributed to exposure to Agent Orange.

Coder, who served in the Air Force from 1965 until 1970, was stationed at DaNang, South Vietnam, from 1969 to 1970, where he was a helicopter pilot with the 37th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS).

There are many more people whose names will never be on memorials, but whose lives ended prematurely after the war because of their service in Vietnam. Some, like John Coder, died of cancer. Others, such as the grievously wounded Lewis B. Puller, Jr., have taken their own lives. Still others have succumbed and will succumb to different forms of post traumatic stress and illness.

THE PLAQUE

The organizers of *The Vietnam War In Memory Memorial, Inc.* acknowledge that it would be impossible to name all the post-war casualties. The group adamantly believes, however, that the proposed symbolic recognition, close to the Wall, on a three-foot-square plaque or tablet level with the ground, is appropriate to honor the memory of these Americans. The group's goal is to reinforce the emotional healing power of the Wall without compromising its architectural integrity.

THE CHALLENGE

Congressional endorsement is necessary for this project. After getting permission from the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, several government commissions also must review the memorial.

In order to obtain governmental approval, endorsements will be needed from many veterans groups as well as civic groups and private citizens. Please write veterans' groups, senators and representatives and urge them to support our project.

We need your help to make the In Memory Memorial plaque a reality. Persons seeking more information, or to volunteer, may call Ruth Coder Fitzgerald at _____, or write to:

Ruth Coder Fitzgerald

Fredericksburg, VA 22401

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

The Vietnam War In Memory Memorial, Inc.

now has a world wide web site. Please try it:

<http://members.aol.com/VietWarMem/plaque.htm>

On July 11, 1998, the concept of this project -- recognition within the Vietnam Veterans Memorial complex in Washington, D.C. of veterans whose postwar deaths can be attributed to their Vietnam War service -- was endorsed by the Vietnam Veterans of America® board of directors.