

The Vietnam Conflict

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We have been researching the impact that the Vietnam Conflict had upon Marshall. One of the first obstacles we faced was in finding people willing to talk about their experiences with Vietnam. After searching for names of possible interviewees, we found three good prospects. Our next source of information was from text and newspaper articles found at the Marshall High School Library, Public Library, and Genealogical Library. We obtained the name of the woman instrumental in bringing the Moving Vietnam Memorial Wall to Marshall, and contacted her for more information.

The U.S. entered into the Vietnam Conflict in the mid 1950's to help stop the spread of Communism. They feared that with Communist North Vietnam invading the free country of South Vietnam it would lead to a domino effect everywhere. This would create a larger population of Communist nations, ones the United States feared. We went and fought to try and stop this; however, we did not succeed. This was the first time that the U.S. didn't successfully complete the task they set out to do and as a result, South Vietnam was overtaken by Communism.

The people in Marshall had a numerous of young boys go to Vietnam in different military areas. They would keep in contact by writing back and fourth between their parents. Parents who had a child in Vietnam would watch the news nightly to keep up to date on what was going on in Vietnam. They would just pray that their child would live and come home safely. That did not always happen some would die and be sent home for a special ceremony done here in Marshall. The ceremony is done for Veterans of any foreign war still today they do the ceremony. The parent talked to other parents who had a child in Vietnam and would share what they knew was going on in Vietnam. Parents sent care packages with stuff to make their sons or daughter feels better and to show that they cared a lot about their loved ones.

Stephen Gard



Stephen Gard joined the C-Bees in 1968 when he was 19 years old. He had lived in Darwin, Illinois, his whole life and did not know what he was going to be doing. He was sent to Vietnam in 1969, when he was 20 years old. He was very "nervous, scared that's where everybody was headed." His first memory of Vietnam was, "There was a sign somebody had wrote over there on the wall [that Vietnam] was the vacation spot of the world. Some of the best times we had was, uh, every couple months, we had a ... US Show come in." He also mentioned it was really hot over there in Vietnam. The jobs Stephen did in Vietnam included, "built roads, bridges, base camps whatever needed done." The road they spent months on building was called Highway 9. Highway 9 was what the North Vietnamese used to invade South Vietnam. Some things that were popular then were, "hair longer and wore bead necklaces, and head bands, and peace symbols... narrow lapels, thin ties, straight leg pants that I can remember." The only protests and rallies he remembered were the ones he saw on television when he came home from his first tour from Vietnam. Some music Stephen enjoyed was,

"Credence Clearwater... Blood Sweat and Tears..." His second tour lasted from April of 1970 to Veterans Day of 1970; he was 22 years of age. "The soldiers of Vietnam were not welcomed when they came back home" stated Stephen Gard. He remembered, "walking down the street after I got back, and running into a person that... asked me where I had been, and if I had been off to college, because they didn't know... I was in Vietnam." It was strange, because the soldiers would be in Vietnam one day and home by the next. They would have to adjust to a completely different environment and get used to being home in their own beds. "It seemed like the right thing to do; now that I am 50 years old, and I look back it, uh, wasn't the right thing to do. I know that's what it was at that time," said by Stephen Gard. It is something he hopes that everyone will remember as good and bad times.

Don Steven



The Moving Vietnam Memorial Wall is a tribute to the men and women who served and died or remain missing as a result of protecting this country's most prized possession, freedom, in the Vietnam War. As a result of many hard-working Wabash Valley people, it made its first appearance in Marshall, Illinois, during the week of May 19-25, 1994. Three Californian Vietnam Vets, John Devitt, Gerry Haver and Norris Shears, first conceived the idea of a portable replica of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D.C. On July 1, 1980, Congress authorized a site near the Lincoln Memorial that would be dedicated to Vietnam Veterans. It was also announced that a design for the memorial would be chosen from any U.S. citizen, at least 18 years of age, by a national competition. Maya Ying Lin, a 21-year-old student of Yale University, submitted the winning design, whereby she said, "The names would become the memorial." Keeping in mind that The Moving Wall is a half scale replica of the one in Washington, D.C. here are some of the dimensions of it. It is 252.83 feet in length. Each of the two walls that make up the whole is 126.5 feet in length. The walls are 6 feet in height at the vertex. It is made out of aluminum and finished with black, high-gloss polyurethane enamel. The process of silk screening was used to apply the 58,191 names to the panels. White epoxy-based ink leaves the names slightly raised, which allows for easy touch and soft lead or crayon rubbings that are practiced by family and friends. The tallest panel contains 137 lines of names, six on each line, while the panel with the least number of names holds only one. The names on the wall are listed in chronological order by casualty. There are 1300 names of Prisoners of War (POW) and those Missing in Action (MIA). Eight names of women are listed on the wall, seven of who were Army nurses and one Air Force nurse. Edgar Berner, Kenneth Ellington, John Rackhaus, and Dow Stepp were four Marshall men killed in the Vietnam Conflict, and their names are listed on the wall. The year of 1959 is inscribed in the wall because in this year the Department of Defense recorded the first American casualties. The year 1975 was the year in which the last casualties of the war, the crew aboard the U.S. freighter Mayaguez, were recorded on May 15th. The diamond seen on the wall indicates that a person's death has been confirmed, while the plus signs symbolize a person who is missing or who is a prisoner of war. Please note that the plus signs are not meant to be a religious symbol. If a person is confirmed dead or their remains are discovered, the plus will be changed to a diamond. If a person is brought home alive, a circle resembling a "circle of life" will be put around the plus.

Eight of the inscribed names are women's. Seven of whom were Army nurses, and one who was an Air Force nurse.

Poems, wreaths, pictures, and other articles put at the site by family and friends are gathered, boxed, and marked for each location at which the wall stops. From there the items are shipped to San Jose, California, where they are stored in the Memorial Fund's warehouse. After The Moving Wall has achieved the purpose for which it was built, a permanent site will be chosen and on it a museum will be built. Inside this museum all of the state flags at which the wall stopped will be displayed and the articles collected will be exhibited under the state flag from which they came.

The purpose of The Moving Wall was and is to reach out and make others feel some of the same feelings that the family and friends of the deceased experience every day of their lives. Visiting The Moving Wall is a major religious experience that is rarely forgotten. It is also called The Healing Wall, and this it does. As a result of The Moving Wall, many veterans are better able to deal with the memories sustained from the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam Conflict, undoubtedly, is a dark spot in United States history, because it is the only war we have lost. Our interviewees Stephen Gard, Doris Hartwell, and Don Steven were very helpful in providing us with the information we needed to make our project a success.