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Remembering Vietnam War Veterans: Interpreting History Through New Orleans Monuments and Memorials

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Remembering Vietnam War Veterans:
Interpreting History Through New Orleans Monuments and Memorials

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the question of how America's citizen soldiers are remembered and how their services can be interpreted through monuments and memorials. The paper discusses the concept of memory and the functions of memorialization. It explores whether and how monuments and memorials portray the difficulties, hardships, horror, costs, and consequences of armed combat. The political motivations behind the design, formation and establishment of the edifices are also probed. The paper considers the Vietnam War monuments and memorials erected by Americans and Vietnam expatriates in New Orleans, Louisiana, and examines their illustrative and educational usefulness. Results reflect that although political benefits accrued from the realization of the memorial structures in question, far more important, palliative and meaningful motives brought about their construction. They also demonstrate that, when understood, monuments and memorials *can be* historically useful.

Keywords: Vietnam War, Vietnam veterans, Vietnamese veterans, Vietnam expatriates, memorial, monument, New Orleans, Louisiana, Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program (VVLP), Louisiana Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program (LVVLP), Vietnam Veterans Memorial of Louisiana Fund, Inc. (VVMLF), memory, new history.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Vietnam War officially ended, abruptly and abortively, in April 1975. America's longest war is still fresh in the minds of a generation of living Americans and Vietnamese, many of whom experienced it firsthand. Nonetheless, in a modern military history text published in 1995, the war is treated as "The Thirty Years War: Vietnam, Parts I and II."¹ That history — encompassing both the French and the subsequent American conflicts in Vietnam — is covered in six paragraphs. As history continues to unfold, the Vietnam War will fade further in importance, its costs and consequences blurred by time. How can Americans prevent the diminishing value of the lessons wrought by military conflict?

This question is pertinent to all such historical events, but the Vietnam War presents a special set of difficulties. Most Americans welcome military service men and women home from war with gratitude and praise. It has long been a practice — except in the case of soldiers returning from Vietnam. They were often booed, spit upon and generally vilified; the Viet vet became a scapegoat for America's involvement in a protracted, unpopular, unsuccessful war. Returning soldiers often faced rejection and verbal, sometimes physical assault; the war was not a welcomed topic outside the walls of veterans clubs. Vietnam veterans discarded their uniforms — some of them upon their arrival in the United States — rather than face demonstrators and public humiliation. All this while many were suffering personally: roughly three million servicemen had been involved in the war effort, over 58,000 American soldiers perished in Vietnam, and many thousands more were physically and mentally damaged.

¹ Geoffrey Parker, *Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare: The Triumph of the West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 346-8.

Thesis Statement

This project is concerned with the question of how Americans who fought in the Vietnam War are remembered and memorialized. The objective is to discuss the concept of memory and the functions of memorialization, and, through the analysis of the Vietnam War memorials in New Orleans, Louisiana, to examine the illustrative and educational usefulness of such structures. Monuments and memorials, often vague and abstract, can fall short of adequate representation and interpretive value. Moreover, political motivations — such as electoral issues — are often behind the design, formation and realization of such edifices, diminishing their commemorative value. Is this the case in the construction of the Vietnam War monuments in New Orleans? This paper will recall the histories of the two New Orleans Vietnam War veterans' monuments and explore whether the common citizen soldiers who answered their country's call (or demand) to arms during the Vietnam War era — however convoluted the objectives became — were finally remembered and honored for their service and sacrifice. It will demonstrate that although political benefits accrued from the realization of the memorial structures in question, far more important, palliative and meaningful motives brought about their construction. When recognized and understood, the New Orleans Vietnam War memorials *can be* historically useful.

Background on Vietnam and the War

Vietnam is on the eastern rim of the Southeast Asian mainland where it meets the South China Sea. Roughly the size of the American state of New Mexico, it stretches out in an elongated “S” shape for more than a thousand miles starting just north of the equator and continuing down to the 24th parallel. Its location has made it a melting pot of cultures, and a battleground for foreign interests and ideologies as well. Vietnam is rich in natural resources, manpower, fertile land, and has access to the sea, aspects coveted by colonial powers. In addition

to foreign aggression, the Vietnamese have always fought among themselves. The country has been ravaged by conflict for over two thousand years.²

Always religiously diverse, Vietnam's population became progressively Catholic in the 19th century. Sources show that between 1827 and 1856, roughly 130,000 Catholics, including hundreds of priests and several important church dignitaries, were murdered there by other religious factions. In 1856, the French, ostensibly to save the Catholics from further persecution, took Danang, then secured Saigon and the surrounding Mekong Delta in the following decade. The French stayed as a colonial power until a climactic confrontation between the French Union's Far East Expeditionary Corps and Viet Minh Communist-nationalist revolutionaries at Dien Bien Phu between March and May of 1954 sealed their withdrawal.

The July 1954 Geneva Accords split Vietnam into North and South at the 17th parallel, a division that was meant to last only two years until elections could be held to choose the government for a new, independent nation. The Northern Viet Minh accepted the Geneva Accords under heavy pressure from China and the Soviet Union, but the Republic of Vietnam refused to sign the agreement as it recognized Communist control of North Vietnam immediately, and created a likelihood that the Communists would take the South in two years. War for control of the country ensued between North Vietnam forces (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, or DRVN) — supported by the Soviet Union, China and other Communist allies; and the government of South Vietnam (the Republic of Vietnam, or RVN) — supported by the United States, South Korea, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines.

² Vietnam is still roughly divided into three distinct regions: North (Tonkin, with Chinese influences), South (Cochin China, with eastern Indian influences), and Central (Annam, with a blending of Chinese and Indian cultures and also the influences of the ancient Cham empire); and has many subcultural differences (Vietnam has 54 officially recognized ethnic groups).

Historically, the Vietnam War³ was a Cold War-era proxy war that arose after the First Indochina War (1946–54).⁴ It took place in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia from November 1, 1955 to the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. The North Vietnamese forces and the Viet Cong⁵ were fighting to reunify Vietnam under Communist rule. They viewed the conflict as a continuation of a colonial war, fought initially against forces from France and then America, and later against South Vietnam. The U.S. government viewed its involvement as part of a containment policy to prevent the spread of Communism.

The Vietnam War was a sobering experience for most Americans. The U.S. foundered into the war and its political objectives for the region — to save the Republic of Vietnam and contain China — met with failure, as did many of its military objectives. From the beginning, the American military underestimated the ideological commitment of its adversaries; some leaders even contemptuously rejected such intangibles. In the end, the United States managed to extricate itself, but the cost to American values and self-esteem was devastating.

When, on April 23, 1975, President Gerald Ford gave a speech at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, announcing for the first time that the Vietnam War was “over ... as far as America is concerned,” the declaration was met with thunderous applause. On the morning of April 29, 1975, the last U.S. diplomatic, military, and civilian personnel were evacuated by helicopter out of Saigon. The next day, the North Vietnamese army and the Viet Cong occupied Saigon and the war was at an end. The Vietnam War moved into the realm of history.

³ Also known as the Second Indochina War, and in Vietnam as the Resistance War Against America or simply the American War.

⁴ Michael Lind, *The Necessary War: A Reinterpretation of America's Most Disastrous Military Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 2002), Prologue, 3.

⁵ The Viet Cong (also known as the National Liberation Front, or NLF), a South Vietnamese Communist group aided by the North, fought a guerilla war against anti-Communist forces in the southern region of Vietnam.

Honoring American Veterans' Service

Due to the ambivalent and problematic memory of this war, the American government and many Americans were reluctant to acknowledge the veterans' Vietnam War service and sacrifices. There were few attempts to honor Vietnam veterans until 1978, when an ambiguous plaque was placed on the plaza behind the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery.⁶ Eventually, however — through great controversy — there emerged “The Wall” in Washington D.C., dedicated in 1982 to honor the American soldiers who died as a consequence of the Vietnam War. Subsequently, in New Orleans, two edifices were erected to honor the local soldiers' service: in November 1984, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the Superdome was dedicated; and in June of 1987, a second structure was dedicated, the Vietnam Veterans Monument on the Basin Street median where it intersects with Iberville Street.

Historiography

“New history” — a movement that deemphasized traditional narrative historical writing that focused on politics and “great men” — rejects total reliance on empirical reality.⁷ The French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1887-1945), whose theories appear in *La Mémoire collective* (*The Collective Memory*) (reprint 1992), became known for his thesis that

⁶ Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Vietnam, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 181-2. The plaque initially covered an addition to the ensemble at the historic Tomb of the Unknowns (a tradition established after WWI, moot in times of modern military record keeping and post-Korean War DNA testing) of a supposedly unidentified soldier who died in Vietnam. In the end the government's overture was viewed as an act of duplicity: it became known that under pressure to provide an unknown, the Central Identification Laboratory had overlooked identification documents and scraps of a flight suit discovered alongside the remains. Later, the remains were confirmed to be those of U.S. Air Force First Lieutenant Michael Blassie, and were ultimately returned to his family. The Medal of Honor bestowed upon him as the Vietnam Unknown was not transferred to Blassie after his remains were identified. After Lt. Blassie was disinterred, the marker at Arlington was replaced with one that read “Honoring and Keeping Faith with America's Missing Servicemen.”

⁷ Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, leaders of the third generation of the Annales School in the 1970s, coined the term “new history.” The movement is associated with cultural history and revolutionized French historiography. Among its aims was the reestablishment of relations between history and other disciplines — such as literary studies, political science, and sociology — so as to enrich the writing of history. Its inclusive nature has also given it the label “total” history.

a society has a collective memory dependent upon a framework within which a group is situated in a society. In his concept, a group memory exists outside of and lives beyond the individual. Hence, an individual's understanding of the past is strongly linked to group consciousness. Halbwachs suggests: “[t]his is evident when we deal with attempts on the part of society to know itself, to reflect on its institutions and its structure, on its laws and mores.”⁸ From this thinking emerged a new and (among academics) controversial way of looking at history.

Halbwachs's concept was advanced by French historian and publisher Pierre Nora in editing his monumental series titled *Lieux de Mémoire* (reprint 1996).⁹ During a time when the French nation was struggling to define itself (1984-1992), Pierre Nora built, through this work, what is commonly recognized as a collective consciousness on a national scale. In the foreword to *Realms of Memory*, Lawrence Kritzman, scholar and editor of the book, illustrates how Nora identified French “memory places,” and writes, “a ‘realm of memory’ is a polyreferential entity that can draw on a multiplicity of cultural myths that are appropriated for different ideological or political purposes,” and explains,

[a]lthough Nora consistently draws our attention to the specificity of the French context, the reader will nevertheless find ... the ways in which [any] nation can rediscover its identity by rearranging the logic constituting its “realms of memory.” Each nation has its official memories and myths ... Americans have anchored their own in the idealistic dream of “liberty and justice for all” ... the history of memory can forge new paradigms of cultural identity.¹⁰

⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 176.

⁹ Literally, *Lieux de Mémoire* translates as “Places of Memory.” Nora's series is a repository of modern concepts of French national identity since the Middle Ages. Nora's name is now associated with modern enlightenment and the study of “new history.”

¹⁰ Pierre Nora, *Rethinking the French Past: Realms of Memory* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1996), vol. I, xiv.

In Nora's own words, one has to look beyond historical reality "to discover the symbolic reality and recover the memory that it sustained." What people think about the past, Kritzman argues, influences current beliefs and behavior.¹¹

David Glassberg's "Public History and the Study of Memory" describes how contemporary scholars use memory to gain insight into how a society creates, disseminates and understands its history. Glassberg states that although the study of collective memory seems like a new field, historians have long been interested in "tracing how ideas about history change over time," and new scholarship reflects the changing interpretations audiences take from prior events, as influenced by their increasingly diverse backgrounds.¹² David Lowenthal applauds historians, "traditionally averse to theorizing about their trade," for evaluating the concept of memory and the impact of the emerging thought processes on history. Lowenthal noted that although psychological studies show memory is suffused with "selective retention, temporal attrition, and deliberate manipulation," most historians remain committed to minimizing inescapable bias, and still strive for accuracy and impartiality.¹³

In *This Republic of Suffering* (2008), Drew Gilpin Faust studied how Americans coped with the carnage of the Civil War. Never before had America's citizens encountered death and suffering on such a broad scale, and it was then, Gilpin asserts, that America had to learn how to mourn the military dead, honor their sacrifice, and commemorate their memory. It was a Civil War memorial ceremony that inspired Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," which emphasized that those killed in battle had not died in vain. Veterans and survivors contending with the consequences of the slaughter influenced local, state and national governments to

¹¹ Nora, vol. I, xvii.

¹² David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory." *The Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (Spring, 1996): 7-23, 30-39.

¹³ David Lowenthal, "History and Memory." *The Public Historian* 19, no. 2 (Spring, 1977): 31.

develop practices of identifying, counting, reclaiming, and burying the battlefield dead, a federal system of national cemeteries, and the erection of countless Civil War monuments in towns and cities, on battlefields and in cemeteries.¹⁴

The need to ascribe significance to the sacrifices and losses of the Civil War brought about the establishment of Decoration Day — the precursor of modern America’s Memorial Day. While the dead could no longer contribute to the military effort, Faust argues, they would “serve other important political and cultural purposes in providing meaning for the war and its costs.”¹⁵ Modern American practices, writes Edward Steer, align with ancient rituals “to confer special honors on the warrior dead” and those who survived the great trials of battle.¹⁶

In its “Listing of Notable Deployments of U.S. Military Forces Overseas, 1798-2008,” the Congressional Research Service reports over 325 instances where American soldiers participated in military actions on foreign soil. That number is increased by subsequent conflicts and by numerous instances of strife within the United States where the services of the armed forces were called upon.¹⁷ What is expected from those pressed into service to the country? To serve and, if necessary, die: many have made the ultimate sacrifice.¹⁸

For those who serve, the American government has numerous systems of rewards and recognitions, including medals, monetary settlements, monuments, memorials, museums, souvenirs, marches/parades, preserved battlefields and dedicated roadways, national cemeteries, ceremonies, and burial rites on land and at sea. Whether or not it is the product of a trend of

¹⁴ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.), 83.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Edward Steer, “Shrines of the Honored Dead: A Study of the National Cemetery System,” Department of the Army Office of the Quartermaster General: U.S. Army Military History Institute Archives UB393.S57: 1.

¹⁷ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/timeline>.

¹⁸ “America’s Wars,” Department of Veterans Affairs. Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, D.C. Accessed October 11, 2015. www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_americans_wars.pdf. World War I – 116,516 battle and other deaths in service; World War II – 405,399 battle and other deaths in service; Korean War – 36,574 battle and other deaths in service (in theater), 17,672 other deaths in service (non-theater); Vietnam War – 58,220 battle and other deaths in service (in theater), 32,000 other deaths in service (non-theater).

hyper-patriotism, private U.S. citizens have augmented these demonstrations of remembrance through attendance at or participation in memorial parades, ceremonies and reenactments, wearing poppies in their lapels, supporting the activities of memorial organizations, and even privately funding monuments and memorials. Kurt Piehler maintains that war memorials in the United States not only serve as sites of memory, they establish a sense of national identity, and their meaning is a reflection of American cultural values.¹⁹

Patrick Hagopian delved into American attempts to come to terms with the legacy of the Vietnam War in the detailed and insightful book *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (2009). Hagopian explores “the need for national ‘healing’ and societal acknowledgment of Vietnam veterans,” and the healing power of war memorials.²⁰ With illustrations and histories, Hagopian reviews over 40 Vietnam national, state and private memorials, including the Louisiana memorial at the Superdome. Hagopian presents originators’ testimonies as well as his own theories on the motivations for their erection, discusses the controversies surrounding them, and exposes political maneuvering behind the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF²¹) — “the political controversies that the VVMF wanted to avoid were, in fact, unavoidable, the neutrality they espoused itself became a matter of debate”²² — and the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program (VVL²³).

¹⁹ Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1995), 51.

²⁰ Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 10.

²¹ The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund was formed in 1979 to collect contributions for the establishment of the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

²² Hagopian, 11.

²³ Under the Reagan administration, the National Volunteer Agency ACTION sponsored an initiative known as the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program, a veterans’ aid group.

Hagopian attempts to show how politicians used the “noble cause”²⁴ and “Vietnam syndrome”²⁵ rhetoric to garner political support, manipulate veterans and re-write history. Hagopian does not shy away from discussing the knowledge and perceptions of American atrocities committed in Vietnam, such as the My Lai massacre of 1968, and GIs’ personal feeling of remorse and/or guilt. Hagopian illustrates how defining and legitimizing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)²⁶ gradually overcame congressional resistance to providing special rehabilitation programs through the Veterans Administration.²⁷ Hagopian points out how quickly chapters of the VVLP spread across the country after 1982.

In his conclusion, Hagopian suggests that counterintuitive as it might seem, all the talk of healing “neglected and foreclosed a more morally satisfactory and hence psychologically effective resolution of memories of the war.” Hagopian speculates that the approach used by the VVMF and subsequent memorial efforts around the country meant that Americans “commemorated the war while ignoring its most troubling aspects. Far from promoting remembrance of the past, therefore, the memorial’s emphasis on ‘healing’ elevates into its prime commemorative principle a strategy of historical denial.”²⁸

Michael Kammen supported Hagopian in “Wall-Gazing: Memorializing Vietnam Veterans While Distorting and Disremembering the War” (2010). Kammen comments that

²⁴ Michael Kammen, “Wall-Gazing: Memorializing Vietnam Veterans While Distorting and Disremembering the War,” *Reviews in American History* Vol. 38, no. 3 (September 2010): 553. Accessed July 19, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40865460>. The “noble cause” was one of the most symptomatic buzzphrases of the postwar period: an “illusory effort by partisans to depoliticize the war by redefining it.”

²⁵ Hagopian, 1. Fear that and future commitment of military forces would involve the nation in another no-win situation – a timidity detrimental to America’s image as a world power. Kammen, 553. The antidote sought was to reestablish American clout in world affairs “without appearing to bog down in another ‘quagmire’ that would alienate public opinion the way Vietnam did after 1968.”

²⁶ Among other causes, atrocities committed and experienced in Vietnam led to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a condition not initially recognized, understood, or regarded with sympathy by many Americans. In 1979, the American Psychiatric Association validated the condition by including it in its diagnostic desk manual.

²⁷ Hagopian, 570.

²⁸ Hagopian, 405.

beyond revealing little-known and otherwise neglected particulars (which Kammen compliments), the ultimate lesson of Hagopian's book concerns:

[w]hat happens when memories are conflicted, get blurred, and gradually become acquired memories – learned in school, from films and books, and from memorials seeking to seem neutral about the purpose, nature, and actual prosecution of the war.

Kammen argues that with the spread of VVLP chapters, “the process of disremembering just how divisive the war had really been and minimizing the active role of antiwar veterans during the 1970s got well underway and has remained too far beneath the radar of the public.” And, Kammen goes on to say,

[a]lthough so many took their design cues from the unanticipated public success of the Vietnam Veterans Monument in Washington, D.C., most of the VVLP initiatives were carried out by individuals who sought to redefine what the U.S. role in Vietnam had been and how the war should be remembered.

Kammen comments that Hagopian is “judgmental, but ... usually judicious,” and supports Hagopian's position that public responses and uses of war memorials has affected and altered perceptions of the conflict.²⁹

It may be impossible to separate political from altruistic motives in the case of public projects. But interviews by this author with numerous individuals involved in the two New Orleans projects indicate that they were not an attempt to rewrite history, nor did political motives alone prompt the citizens of Louisiana to sponsor and build them. And although Hagopian and Kammen insist that building Vietnam War monuments is an attempt to “disremember,” this author's conversations — with the monuments' founders, the people who contributed, and the Vietnam War veterans who believe they understand their meaning and intent — show that disremembering is not largely a motive in the case. Many of the reasons behind

²⁹ Kammen, 554-5.

creating the LVVLP were positive in nature, and the benefits tangible — such as setting up job programs for unemployed veterans, rehabilitation for drug and alcohol dependent veterans and providing a forum (meetings and activities) where the former soldiers could talk openly, among their own. Likewise, members of the Vietnamese Veterans Association, in erecting their monument, were not seeking a political end, but searching for a way to publicly express gratitude. They assert that it was not among the originators' or the memorials' purposes to camouflage the carnage (that is inherent in war), but to search for understanding, to prove acknowledgment, and to find a way to move on.

Christina Schwenkel, in *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation* (2009), probed how the “American War” is remembered and commemorated in Vietnam in official and unofficial histories and everyday life. Schwenkel analyzes “trauma tourism,” the concentration on representations found in Vietnamese monuments and martyrs’ cemeteries, museums, photography and art exhibits. Schwenkel notes a marked increase in the number of state memorial projects in recent years, and examines the “aesthetic practices of nation building and memory making.”³⁰

Schwenkel holds that Vietnamese state monuments are cultural and artistic expressions of national values, sentiments and ideals (“neither fixed nor agreed upon”) that reflect the shifting “sociohistorical and aesthetic contexts” in which they are produced. Like Hagopian, Schwenkel approaches monuments as instruments of “forgetting” that silence and displace historical pasts, and proffers that seemingly “national” projects are “entangled with broader transnational aesthetic practices and historical struggles over power, memory, knowledge, history and meaning.” She comments that the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City is a

³⁰ Christina Schwenkel, *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009), 105.

“controversial site of knowledge production that attempts to appease, integrate, and at times moderate diverse transnational expressions of memory,” through the “multiple and ambiguous” messages the museum conveys to visitors.³¹ For contemplation, she offers the premise that unlike Vietnam’s reconciliatory gesture toward the United States (a practice commonly referred to as “close the past to face the future”), “the reverse has occurred in the U.S. policy toward Vietnam: that of recalling the past to shape the present and the future.”³²

The work of any monument or memorial is to construct meaning from fragments of experience, to consolidate public memory, and to reflect history. As historian James Mayo wrote, “[a] memorial is an artifact that imposes meaning and order beyond the temporal and chaotic experiences of life.”³³ In addition to filling the emotional need to remember the servicemen, the memorials fill the American need to express a deeply rooted nationalism, with all its ironies and contradictions. Nationally syndicated columnist and conservative James Kilpatrick described the Vietnam Wall in Washington as “the most moving memorial ever erected ... each of us may remember what he wishes to remember — the cause, the heroism, the blunders, or the waste.”³⁴ Idealistically speaking, each of the New Orleans monuments can be said to do the same.

Pierre Nora’s definition of a *lieu de mémoire* — as any significant entity, “which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of [the] community”³⁵ — applies. The national and local monuments and memorials dedicated to the Vietnam War veterans are American *lieu de mémoire*.

³¹ Note: this author has seen the War Remnants Museum, and agrees with Schwenkel’s observations on its collection.

³² Schwenkel, 105.

³³ James Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 62.

³⁴ Kristin Hass, *Carried to the Wall* (University of California Press, 1998), 16.

³⁵ Nora, vol. I, xvii.

Chapter 2: Vietnam War Veterans Monuments and Memorials

The purposes of monuments and memorials – to remember, honor and educate — can be better realized through an exploration of the history surrounding their construction.³⁶ Moreover, uncovering the provenance of a monument can lead to a better understanding of its intended meaning. With this in mind, this work will consider the vanguard “Healing Wall” in Washington D.C., and the two monuments New Orleanians established and dedicated to the soldiers who served in Vietnam.

The Healing Wall in Washington, D.C.

The National Vietnam Veterans Memorial (“The Wall”) was the project of a wounded Vietnam veteran, Jan C. Scruggs,³⁷ who studied the phenomenon of PTSD after he returned from the war. Scruggs believed a memorial would help with the healing process for the roughly three million servicemen who had been involved in the war effort. Seeding the initiative with \$2,800 of his own money, he formed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund in 1979. His idea was to honor the veterans but not the conflict, thereby ensuring a memory that emphasized the contributions of the soldiers rather than the decisions of the Johnson and Nixon administrations. The fund got off to a rocky start, but after the founders reluctantly agreed to accept the support of interested politicians, Congress approved legislation reserving three acres of the National Mall for the monument site. Celebrities, including Bob Hope, helped raise funds, all of which came

³⁶ There is some blurring between the definitions of monuments and memorials. However, monuments are built to remember a significant person, achievement, event or time period in history; whereas memorials have a more somber connotation, and are often related to death and destruction.

³⁷ Scruggs was a corporal in the United States Army’s 199th Light Infantry Brigade. Upon completion of his service he attended American University in Washington, D.C. where he obtained a master's degree in counseling. Scruggs now manages the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund as CEO. Scruggs is also a motivational speaker, an attorney, and author of several books and numerous articles dealing with the Vietnam War for the *Washington Post* and other publications. A docudrama titled “To Heal a Nation” (1988) recalls Scruggs’ monumental project.

from the private sector. By 1981, \$8.4 million had been collected from corporations, foundations, veterans groups, civic organizations, labor unions, and individual citizens.

The promoters understood that it would be difficult to create a representation that would satisfy a society with divided opinions about the war, so a design contest was organized. Guidelines stipulated that the memorial would contain the names of every American who died in Vietnam or remained missing in action; would not make a political statement about the war; would be in harmony with its surroundings; and be contemplative in character. The winning design, chosen unanimously by a panel of eight artists and designers from among nearly 1,400 submissions, came from a 21-year-old Chinese-American Yale University student, Maya Lin.

In contrast with the white marble statues and structures surrounding it on the Mall, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a black Indian granite inverted V-shaped wall, partially sunken into the shallow of an earthwork.³⁸ It is inscribed with the names of over 58,000 soldiers killed during or as a result of the Vietnam War in the chronological order in which they died. Dedicated on Veterans Day in 1982, it lies northeast of the Lincoln Monument, near the intersection of 22nd Street and Constitution Avenue NW. It is accessible twenty-four hours a day. The design drew comments from every quarter. *The New York Times* said it conveyed “the only point about the war on which people may agree: that those who died should be remembered.”³⁹

The Wall is one of most frequently visited tourist attractions in Washington, D.C. Its design promotes interaction. Visitors move along its length reading and touching the names chiseled in half-inch-high letters, and they are encouraged to take rubbings. Therapeutic programs for veterans with PTSD often make visiting The Wall part of their emotional healing.

³⁸ Two walls of polished granite, each 246 feet long, are composed of seventy-four panels that gradually increase in height from eight inches to more than ten feet at the center, where they meet at a 125-degree angle. It is cut into a small downward sloping hill, and cannot be seen from most locations on the National Mall.

³⁹ "Remembering Vietnam," *New York Times*, May 18, 1981.

Visitors often leave offerings such as flags and flowers, letters, medals, dog tags, religious items and photographs.⁴⁰ Legend has it that the first offering was a Purple Heart tossed into the construction concrete by the brother of a soldier who died in Vietnam. In *Carried to the Wall*, Kristen Ann Hass writes that leaving gifts is an attempt by mourners to articulate what a soldier's life and death mean for them:

[t]he deep need to remember the war and the challenges that it presented to the idea of the nation, the soldier, and the citizen ... inspired hundreds of thousands of Americans to bring their own memorials to the Wall.⁴¹

New Orleans Vietnam War Structures

With many of the difficult issues surrounding the memorialization of the Vietnam War addressed and accommodated in the proceedings leading up to the establishment of the final Washington D. C. Vietnam Memorial complex, that structure became the impetus for a preponderance of state and local memorials that followed. An analysis of information on over 300 Vietnam War memorials erected through 1988, 101 of which had dedication dates ascribed, shows that 51 percent were dedicated between 1983 and 1988.⁴² In that number were the Louisiana Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the New Orleans Superdome, dedicated on Veterans Day, November 11, 1984; and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Monument on Basin Street at the intersection of Iberville Street, dedicated on April 30, 1988, the anniversary of the fall of Saigon.

⁴⁰ Non-perishables are collected and cataloged by National Park Service Rangers and sent to the National Park Service Museum Resource Center. Wall artifacts will be featured in an education center now under construction.

⁴¹ Hass, 2.

⁴² Jerry and Sandra Strait, *Vietnam War Memorials: An Illustrated Reference to Veterans Tributes Throughout the United States* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1988), 96.

Chapter 3: The American Vietnam War Veterans Memorial in New Orleans

The Louisiana Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program (LVVLP)

The Louisiana chapter of the VVLP, headed by Bob Odom,⁴³ helped find employment, treatment for ongoing health issues (including drug and alcohol addiction), and secured other benefits for surviving Louisiana servicemen.⁴⁴ Organizers of the LVVLP agreed, with the original charter, to “sunset” the group at the end of its mission to provide immediate aid and support to Vietnam War veterans, so as not to be in competition with any other veterans’ organization. The LVVLP was dissolved in 1985.⁴⁵ Members of the organization were among the delegation of roughly 50 Louisianans that went to Washington D.C. for the dedication of the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982. It was medically retired U.S. Marine First Lieutenant William F. “Bill” Ryan,⁴⁶ a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee of the State of Louisiana, who put the group together.

After recovering from multiple war wounds in his hometown of Buffalo, New York, Ryan studied law at Tulane University where he met the woman he would wed. They decided to live in New Orleans. As a young lawyer, he became involved in politics, a protégé of Louisiana Congressman Nat Kiefer.⁴⁷ One of the most prominent Vietnam veterans in the South at the

⁴³ Robert F. “Bob” Odom, Jr. (1935–2014) was the longest-serving Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry in Louisiana. A Democrat, Odom held his position from 1980 to 2008 through six gubernatorial administrations. Odom was a graduate of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and at retirement was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve. Odom served on many boards and commissions for the state of Louisiana.

⁴⁴ Joan Treadway, “Vietnam veterans form group to honor dead, aid the living.” *Times-Picayune/Stater Item* (New Orleans, LA). March 14, 1983. In 1983 there were 175,000 Vietnam veterans in Louisiana, due in part to migration to the Sun Belt.

⁴⁵ William Ryan interview by the author, Metairie, Louisiana, May 19, 2015.

⁴⁶ William F. “Bill” Ryan is a retired U.S. Marine Corps officer and a licensed attorney practicing in Louisiana since 1975. Currently, Mr. Ryan develops real estate and manages other private equity investments. <http://www.trimarkconstructors.com/about-us.html>.

⁴⁷ Ignatz Gerard Kiefer (1939-1985) was a native of New Orleans and an attorney who served as a state representative from 1986 to 1970, and as a state senator from 1970 until his death.

time,⁴⁸ Ryan was the first Vietnam veteran appointed to the Louisiana Veterans Affairs Commission. During his tenure, Ryan says, “[w]e got a bunch of legislation passed for veterans’ benefits in the state.”⁴⁹

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial of Louisiana Fund, Inc. (VVMLF)

Ryan became chair of the VVMLF, whose mission was to establish a tribute to Vietnam War veterans at a state level. The Louisiana non-profit corporation began work on the New Orleans Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1983. There was virtually no opposition to erecting such a structure in Louisiana; the major controversies came from the questions “where” and “what.”

After considering many suggested locations, including Baton Rouge and somewhere along Interstate 10, the LVVLP Site Selection Committee, chaired by Ron Gardner,⁵⁰ finally agreed that the (then) Louisiana Superdome, 1500 Sugar Bowl Drive, New Orleans Louisiana, would be the best place to locate such a memorial, where it would be seen by the large crowds the Superdome’s events attract. In 1983, Bill Ryan arranged through civic organizer Bob Tucker⁵¹ to make a presentation to the Superdome Stadium Commission and request its approval, which was granted, provided the LVVLP paid to reinforce the plaza level of the Superdome where the heavy sculpture would be placed.

⁴⁸ Ryan is the recipient of the Silver Star (May 24, 1969) and Navy Commendation “V” for heroism in Vietnam (May 18, 1969).

⁴⁹ Ryan interview.

⁵⁰ Ron E. Gardner is a New Orleans native and honorably discharged U.S. Army Vietnam veteran. He was a founding member of the Louisiana Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program, and served as a national representative on the Agent Orange Class Assistance Program Advisory Board. Gardner served as Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the New Orleans Downtown Development District, and was Vice-Chancellor for Administrative, Community and Security Affairs at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans.

⁵¹ Robert H. “Bob” Tucker, Jr. served in the U. S. Air Force in Vietnam. A political figure and businessman in New Orleans, Louisiana, Tucker was then an assistant to New Orleans Mayor Maurice Edwin “Moon” Landrieu.

Approval of the design proved far more contentious. Don Doyle⁵² spearheaded the Design Committee, which also included Perry Tillman, Bart Loomis, and Glenn Taylor. A design competition, open to all Louisiana residents, culminated in a contract with artist Milton Pounds.⁵³ Doyle remembers Pounds' drawings surpassed that of any other contestant, "hands down."⁵⁴

According to Bill Ryan, and contrary to the commonly accepted credits, it was not Pounds' design that was used for the final sculpture.⁵⁵ The sculptor chosen for the project, Korean War veteran William Ludwig,⁵⁶ molded a maquette of Pound's design for the VVMLF board to see. Ryan said, "[Pounds] had everybody going down ... facing down ... dragging a body ... there was nothing uplifting about it. The message was a bad one. It was like dejection ... rejection." Ryan told the committee, "[t]he message we want to send is we're looking up ... [aware] of our surroundings and our comrades, and what's going on. Alert." In an interview in 2015, Doyle described the committee's meetings as "spirited." He said Pounds was unwilling to even consider "changes here and there" to his original design.⁵⁷

After The VVMLF legally settled with Pounds for his work up to that point, Ryan met with Ludwig and said: "I'm going to tell you what is acceptable. You have a license to do whatever you want, but you have to create an uplifting experience that people will remember."

⁵² Donald W. "Don" Doyle, Jr. served in the U.S. Marine Corps until 1970, achieving the rank of captain. He served two tours of duty in Vietnam. Doyle was a partner in the law firm of Doyle, Smith and Doyle from 1966 to 1980, and is now Chairman, CEO, and sole shareholder of Blanchard and Company, Inc., dealing in precious metals. Blanchard Website, accessed July 19, 2015, <https://www.blanchardgold.com/about/leadership/>.

⁵³ Milton Pounds, artist and (then) resident of Metairie, Louisiana, was a Vietnam War veteran.

⁵⁴ Donald Doyle interview by the author, New Orleans, Louisiana, August 5, 2015.

⁵⁵ Betty Guillard, "Lagniappe." *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), July 27, 1987. Guillard provides a more accurate attribution, "[t]he memorial was ... *based* [author's italics] on a concept by Milton Pounds..."

⁵⁶ William Ludwig was a native of Hartford, Connecticut who earned his Master of Fine Arts degree from Newcomb College in New Orleans. He lived in southeast Louisiana from 1966 until his death in 2011. Ludwig sculptures may be found in corporate and private collections worldwide.

⁵⁷ Both Ryan and Doyle remember that Pounds made threats on Ryan's life (Ryan and Doyle interviews).

Ludwig redesigned, sculpted and cast the piece. The memorial committee worked with Ludwig to refine his plans and insure complete authenticity of detail: military reserve units and individual veterans offered uniforms, equipment and firearms of the period for models. Ludwig's website⁵⁸ claims that the sculpture, ordered in February of 1984, was the first of several subsequent Vietnam veterans' state monuments to be erected in the United States. But the New Orleans piece is the only one of its kind — the mold used in the lost wax technique was destroyed in the casting process.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial

On the Poydras Street side of the plaza level of the Mercedes Benz Superdome stands the bronze outdoor sculpture whose realism, “[a]t first sight ... is startling,” according to the *Times-Picayune* “Lifestyle” writer Sharon Litwin:

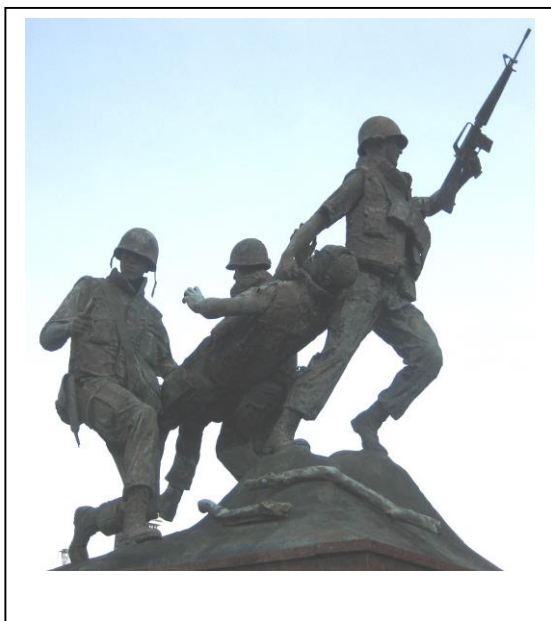


Figure 1 © 2015 Catherine B. Haws

Three soldiers, each looking in a different direction, each searching for the hidden enemy who shoots from trees or attacks from the jungle, are carrying a wounded comrade. One grabs the injured soldier by the front of his shirt ... [t]he soldiers rush forward, an M-16 rifle in the air, a handgun at the ready, their faces express a combination of fear, concern, acute awareness.⁵⁹

The life-size figures and foundation measure 10 feet high, 8 feet wide, and 5-1/2 feet deep. The sculpture weighs 5,200 pounds. The

⁵⁸ <http://williamludwigsculpture.com>.

⁵⁹ Sharon Litwin, “Tribute to comradeship.” *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), January 21, 1984.

four soldiers that comprise the sculpture are all depicted in combat fatigues and flak jackets, and all except the wounded man wear helmets. The sculpture faces east; the soldiers are running up a slight incline. The leader's M-16 rifle is held high in his left hand, and he grasps the wounded soldier's vest with his right hand. The middle soldier's .45 caliber M1911 A-1 automatic pistol is in his right hand, and with his left he hauls the wounded soldier's left leg. The last standing warrior carries an M-79 40mm grenade launcher in his right hand and with his left he hoists the wounded soldier by his belt. The wounded man is bandaged around his head and over his left eye.

The Vietnam War Veterans Memorial sculpture, according to its creator William Ludwig, was his largest piece, and posed special fabrication challenges. The form for the sculpture's platform, for example, was too massive for handling in Ludwig's studio and was taken to Service Foundry, a subsidiary of Avondale Shipyards for casting. The rectangular red marble base's six-foot height and 6,000-pound weight made moving it to the sculptor's foundry impractical, so the rest of the pieces and welding equipment were brought to the base for assembly. The sculpture's designated site on the Superdome's plaza level had to be reinforced from underneath, temporarily blocking an area of the parking garage, and heavy cranes had to be leased to situate the sculpture once assembled. Ludwig said that while the techniques used were the same as for other items in his collection, his feelings for this piece were different. "I really got involved in it. I can tell you quite frankly that I cannot possibly be objective about it."⁶⁰

The bronze was put in place on October 22, 1984. It is dated in Latin numerals and signed by the sculptor. The Vietnam Memorial was the first sculpture to grace the Superdome plaza, and for a long time, it stood alone.

⁶⁰ Litwin.

What the design committee members and the sculptor meant to convey was the spirit of comradeship among the troops.⁶¹ Charles Slay, a member of the leadership board said, “[t]heir lives depended on you and yours on them. That’s what it was all about.” Committee members said their hope was that the monument contributes to the healing process. Harry J. Doughty,⁶² (then) Director of The Vet Center, mentioned that he experienced a shift in national attitudes toward Vietnam veterans when he went to Washington D.C. for the dedication of the national monument in 1982, and he thought the New Orleans monument would continue the healing process locally.⁶³

The memorial is well maintained and accessible. On the Superdome-facing side of its base is the John F. Kennedy January 20, 1961 quotation,

LET EVERY NATION KNOW, WHETHER IT WISHES US WELL OR ILL, THAT WE SHALL
PAY ANY PRICE, BEAR ANY BURDEN, MEET ANY HARDSHIP, SUPPORT ANY FRIEND,
OPPOSE ANY FOE, TO ASSURE THE SURVIVAL AND THE SUCCESS OF LIBERTY.

Inside its base are the names of the 881 Louisiana soldiers killed in Vietnam.⁶⁴

Twenty-two bronze plaques on the railing wall across from the sculpture outline the war’s year-by-year history from 1954 to 1976.⁶⁵ The chronology is rendered in concise detail. Six of the plaques depict the 1950s, beginning with President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s offer to aid the South Vietnamese government after the Communist defeat of the French, the exodus of over a million North Vietnamese to the south, the refusal of South Vietnam to sign the Geneva accords and the U.S. organization of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. The latter part of

⁶¹ Litwin.

⁶² Harry J. Doughty, Sr. is now an Assistant Professor at Southern University New Orleans. Doughty holds an MSW degree from Atlanta University School of Social Work, and has nearly three decades of clinical and administrative experience, with extensive work in the treatment of combat related stress and substance abuse.

⁶³ Litwin.

⁶⁴ National Archive records as of April 29, 2008, show 885 deaths from the state of Louisiana, the increase accounts for post-war recoveries.

⁶⁵ The project’s Design Committee, headed by Donald W. Doyle, Jr., researched and reported the history that appears on the plaques.

the decade, according to the history, saw Premier Ngo Dinh Diem's consolidation of power, and his guerilla infiltration of the south.

Ten plaques cover the 1960s, starting with North Vietnam's announcement of the formation of the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) in South Vietnam, President John F. Kennedy's decisions to increase American involvement, the overthrow of Premier Diem, President Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon B. Johnson's affirmation of the U.S. commitment to a non-communist South, the "Tonkin Gulf Resolution" (the "functional equivalent of a declaration of war"), and the entry of North Vietnamese regular units into South Vietnam. In the last half of the decade, the U.S. combat role grew, Nguyen Van Thieu was elected president of South Vietnam, American troops won a costly victory at Khe Sahn, and halted the Tet Offensive. The heavy fighting increased domestic opposition to the war, the U.S. imposed a troop ceiling, bombing of North Vietnam was ceased and President Richard M. Nixon announced the beginning of U.S. troop withdrawals.

The six plaques that cover the 1970s address the war's spread into Cambodia, the intensification of American home front opposition, South Vietnamese attacks on supply routes in Laos, the "Pentagon Papers" exposé, and resumption of U.S. bombing of the north including areas near Hanoi and Haiphong. The history winds down with the 1973 Paris Peace Accord, withdrawal of the last American troops, Congress' refusal of further military aid to South Vietnam, Gerald Ford's assumption of the U.S. presidency after the resignation of Richard Nixon, Congress' final refusal of additional funding, and South Vietnam's surrender. Contrary to Michael Kammen's professions that VVLP institutions were essentially redefining the U.S. role in Vietnam and how it should be remembered, these plaques demonstrate a straightforward account of the history of the war.

According to the dedication program, the sacrifice and service of the Louisianians (more than 60,000 who served in Vietnam and the 90,000-plus who served within their country during the Vietnam-era) must be recorded and memorialized for future generations. “Their service was no less honorable than that of Americans in any previous war,” the dedication pamphlet asserts, adding that the memorial is “a symbol of gratitude for the courage, sacrifice and devotion to duty and country of Louisiana’s veterans.” And through the memorial, “both supporters and opponents of the War may find a common ground for recognizing and appreciating these ideals, which were also a part of the Vietnam experience.”⁶⁶ Peter Braestrup, a Korean War veteran, Vietnam War correspondent, editor of *The Wilson Quarterly* and guest speaker at the dedication, commented that a confusion of attitudes had lingered for more than a decade; many veterans were treated as either victims of an unjust war or as psychopaths. He claimed that all the Vietnam veterans asked was the same recognition, respect and gratitude the nation had always given to its fighting men.⁶⁷ On the monument’s Poydras Street side base is the inscription,

IN HONOR OF THE SERVICE
AND SACRIFICE OF
LOUISIANA’S VIETNAM
VETERANS WHO, LIKE THEIR
FOREFATHERS, ANSWERED
THEIR NATION’S CALL
TO DUTY.

The caliber and quality of the dedication ceremony participants speak to the importance placed by the community on the memorial’s inauguration. The event began with a Louisiana Army National Guard manned UH-1 Huey helicopter flyover along Poydras Street, the American National Anthem was sung by Mrs. Rhonda L. Evans, and representatives of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard Color Guards presented the nation’s

⁶⁶ “Louisiana’s Vietnam veterans honored,” *Acadian Profile* V. 11, 5 (November 1984): 5, accessed March 6, 2015, http://articles.latimes.com/print/1992-0-13/local/me-196_1_vietnamese-community.

⁶⁷ Bob Ross, “Vietnam vet memorial dedicated.” *Times-Picayune/States Item* (New Orleans, LA), November 12, 1984.

colors. Jefferson Parish Sheriff Harry Lee, Honorary Chairman of the Louisiana Vietnam Veterans Memorial Dedication Committee, led the Pledge of Allegiance, and Commander Kenneth J. Murphy, United States Navy, Senior Chaplain, Naval Support Activity New Orleans, offered the invocation and memorial prayer. Local newscaster Norman Robinson, a Navy veteran and Master of Ceremonies, made welcoming remarks. The funding co-chairmen, Odon Bacqué (Lafayette),⁶⁸ Tom Hollis (Monroe), and Bill Ryan (New Orleans), cut the memorial ribbon. The event included the laying of a memorial wreath, and a ceremonial firing detail by the Inspector-Instructor Staff of the 3rd Battalion, 23rd Marines. The Alcee Fortier High School Band Buglers sounded “Taps,” and the nation’s colors were retired by the joint services. The 159th Tactical Fighter Group of the Louisiana Air National Guard participated with an F-4C Phantom Jet flyover, saluting with the “missing man” maneuver.⁶⁹

Luminaries of state and local government appeared on the list of Honorary Directors of the project. Many were among the several hundred people who participated in the ceremonies. Some attendees wore uniforms from their service in Vietnam, and many more waved tiny American flags. Numerous dignitaries have visited the memorial since its installation, including General William C. Westmoreland, commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968.

The final cost of the monument was close to \$325,000.⁷⁰ The only contribution that came from the State of Louisiana was a joint resolution by the House of Representatives and Senate (House Concurrent Resolution 229) to declare it the official state memorial to those who served

⁶⁸ Odon Lessley Bacqué, Jr. of Lafayette, Louisiana is a former Green Beret (5th Special Forces) who fought in Vietnam from 1968 to 1970. Bacqué served one term in the Louisiana House of Representatives. In 2014, he released an e-book about the foibles of the war, *A Walk in the Park: A Vietnam Comedy*. Bacqué now operates a life insurance business and is involved in numerous civic affairs.

⁶⁹ The “missing man” maneuver is an aerial salute, involving five jets, wherein one fighter peels off the “V” formation, representing a fallen pilot.

⁷⁰ Most often cited of widely varying figures. Ryan’s exact records were borrowed by a University of New Orleans student, and never returned to him.

in Vietnam. Funding efforts began in October 1982, and the money for the memorial was raised over approximately five years, coming primarily from private donations across Louisiana. In a May 19, 2015 interview with the author, Ryan said he found it hard to believe, in retrospect, that the efforts of the initial eleven⁷¹ veterans who banded together and traveled the state to get support for the memorial concept finally came to fruition.

At the time of dedication, \$200,000 of the funds needed had been raised. Funding came not only from contributions, but from sources as diverse as the Annual Veterans Memorial Classic 10-Kilometer race in Kenner,⁷² the raffle of a replica 1926 Mercedes Benz, and events in connection with the premier of the movie “Platoon.”⁷³ In February of 1985, a letter went out over Ryan’s signature stating that over \$245,000 had been collected “to pay a very special tribute to Louisiana’s Vietnam veterans.” There was still a deficit. In March, members of the LLVLP and other volunteers staged a collection effort (what Bill Ryan called a “can shaking”) in the New Orleans French Quarter, in part to complete the memorial ensemble with two flagpoles to display the United States and state of Louisiana flags.⁷⁴ Those additions were dedicated on April 30, 1985, when flags were hoisted by Vietnam veterans Glenn Taylor and Harry Doughty, on the tenth anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.⁷⁵

By that time, Ryan reports, the fundraisers were exhausted. “I had asked everybody ...and [we] just couldn’t keep going back to them,” Ryan said, but \$40,000 remained on a

⁷¹ Odon L. Bacqué, Harry J. Doughty, Donald W. Doyle, Jr., Ron E. Gardner, Walter Gomard, Thomas A. Hollis, Bart Loomis, Ken J. Martin (now deceased), William F. Ryan, Charles Sleigh, and Perry Tillman.

⁷² “Run Helped Memorial.” *Times-Picayune/States Item* (New Orleans, LA). November 29, 1984.

⁷³ “Platoon” is a 1986 American war film written and directed by Oliver Stone who based the story on his experiences as a U.S. infantryman in the Vietnam War. It was the first Hollywood film to be written and directed by a veteran of that conflict. The film was marketed with the tag line, “The first casualty of war is innocence.” Released in USA in 1986, the film won Academy Awards that year for “Best Picture,” “Best Director,” “Best Sound Mixing” and “Best Film Editing.”

⁷⁴ “Vietnam memorial needs cash.” *Times-Picayune/States Item* (New Orleans, LA), March 28, 1985.

⁷⁵ “Flag Day.” *Times-Picayune/States Item* (New Orleans, LA), May 18, 1988. The organization’s executive director noted on that day that the fund was still \$44,000 short of its financial goal.

Hibernia Bank note that all the members of the committee had signed. “We’ve got one last push,” Ryan told his board. In attendance at that meeting was Bill Detweiler,⁷⁶ (then) commander of the Louisiana American Legion and the president of the national American Legion, who suggested they make a pitch to the state convention of his organization. Ryan made the presentation and the American Legion unanimously approved assumption of \$28,000 of the remaining debt on September 1, 1987. The LVVMF sponsored a \$100-a-ticket raffle to raise the balance.⁷⁷ The Louisiana First District American Legion assumed responsibility for a \$30,000 perpetual care and maintenance trust.

The dedication ceremony program thanked the people of the state for their financial contributions and recognized the more than 550 Louisiana volunteers who donated their time, energy and creativity to support the project. It also included corporate sponsors and organizations: the Louisiana Superdome Commission and Superdome Staff; Louisiana Distributors of Coors and Coors Light Beer and the Coors Brewery in Golden, Colorado; S & S Wholesale Sporting Goods, Inc. and all Louisiana outlets for Converse sporting goods corporation; the American Legion and Auxiliary; Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary; AMVETS and Auxiliary; the Paralyzed Veterans of America Bayou Chapter; and Thompson Printing Company of Gretna, Louisiana.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the Superdome is one of over 250 monuments that dot the New Orleans area. Nearby is another monument that not only honors the American soldiers who defended the anti-Communist cause in Vietnam, but also pays tribute to a scarcely acknowledged component of the diverse American population, the Vietnamese expatriates.

⁷⁶ William M. Detweiler, a U.S. Army veteran and private practice attorney in New Orleans, is currently a consultant for military and veterans’ affairs at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. In 2013, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal appointed Detweiler to the Louisiana Veterans’ Affairs Commission.

⁷⁷ Lynn Jensen, “Veterans fight to pay debt.” Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA), July 30, 1987.

Chapter 4: The Vietnamese Vietnam War Monument in New Orleans

Vietnamese Migration to the U. S.

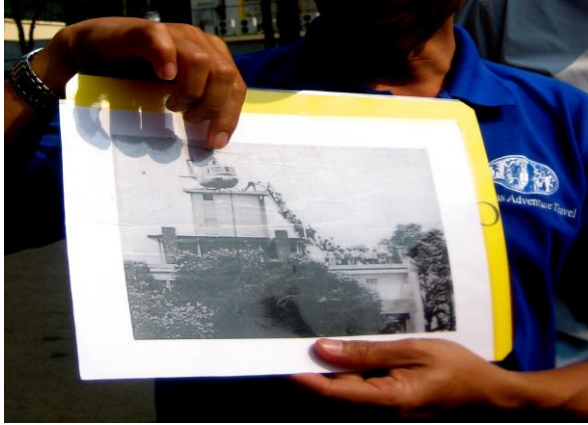


Figure 2

© Catherine B. Haws

One of the most iconographic photographs of 1975 is of a helicopter perched atop a Saigon apartment building in the U.S. Embassy complex with what appears to be an endless stream of humanity attempting a last-minute escape from the inevitable political

purge that was to come from the Communist unification of North and South Vietnam. In an operation titled “Frequent Wind,” 1,373 U.S. citizens and 5,595 Vietnamese and third country nationals were airlifted from the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon. Military and CIA-owned Air America helicopters took evacuees to U.S. Navy ships offshore during an approximately 24-hour period.⁷⁸ In 1975, the United States government airlifted roughly 125,000 people (nearly half of the pro-U.S. Vietnamese population) to bases in the Philippines, Wake Island, and Guam.⁷⁹

The mid-70s Vietnam exodus began a fundamental reformulation of American refugee policy and the creation of the modern Vietnamese American community. The fleeing Southeast Asians went to refugee centers at Camp Pendleton in San Diego, California; Fort Chaffee in Little Rock, Arkansas; Eglin Air Force Base near Valparaiso, Florida; and Fort Indiantown Gap

⁷⁸ During the operation, many helicopters that had landed on the vessels were pushed overboard to make room for more people. Other helicopters, having nowhere to land, were deliberately crash landed into the sea after dropping their passengers close to the ships, their pilots bailing out at the last moment to be picked up by rescue boats.

⁷⁹ “Indochinese Resettlement Program, aka: “Operation New Life,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* 9 (updated March 12, 2015): 1, accessed May 11, 2015, http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID_5562.

near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Refugees entered the United States under the Indochina Migration and Refugee Act of 1975, signed into effect by President Gerald Ford.⁸⁰

At the time, despite a national poll that showed that only 36 percent of Americans favored Vietnamese immigration,⁸¹ the 1975 legislation granted the refugees special status to enter the country under a domestic resettlement program. The law was amended in 1977 to permit refugees to become lawful permanent residents (LPRs).

Although generally high skilled and well-educated, the first wave of refugees underwent up to six months of education and cultural training to facilitate their assimilation into their new societies. To avoid concentrating incoming Vietnamese in one geographic area, refugees were scattered across the country, but many re-congregated, particularly in California and Texas. An ever-growing number came to and eventually settled in the New Orleans area.⁸²

In 1978, there began another major wave of Vietnamese refugees: those fleeing Communist re-education camps (essentially concentration camps) and those frightened by the 1979 Chinese invasion of their country. That wave lasted into the mid-1980s. Both North and South Vietnamese were leaving the country. This evacuation included a segment of the population who took to the sea in any form of transport they could find and became known as the “Boat People.” The number of Boat People leaving Vietnam and arriving safely⁸³ in another country between 1975 and 1995 totaled almost 800,000.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ The 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Act appropriated \$455 million toward the costs of assisting the settlement of Indochinese refugees.

⁸¹ Alicia Campi, “From Refugees to Americans: Thirty Years of Immigration to the United States,” *Immigration Daily* (March 13, 2006), accessed April 28, 2015. The U.S. was experiencing a high unemployment rate at the time.

⁸² Hataipreuk Rkasnuam and Jeanne Batalova, “Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute (August 25, 2014): 1. Accessed October 11, 2015.
<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/Vietnamese-immigrants-united-states/>.

⁸³ Dangers and hardships such as over-crowding on the boats, pirates, and storms cost many lives.

⁸⁴ “Indochinese Resettlement Program, aka: “Operation New Life.”

The massed flight caused an international humanitarian crisis as other Southeast Asian countries became increasingly unwilling to accept more refugees on their shores. President Jimmy Carter sent the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet to the South China Sea to aid the thousands of desperate asylum seekers, and in July, 1979, the United States participated in the United Nations' First Geneva Conference on Indochinese Refugees.

Under pressure, the Vietnam government agreed to a systematic regulation of the flow of people leaving the country, and established an Orderly Departure Program (ODP) under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Southeast Asian countries agreed to admit the Boat People temporarily, and developed countries⁸⁵ agreed to assume most of the costs of caring for and resettling the almost two million refugees in their own lands.

By the end of September 1994, 167,000 Vietnamese former detainees and their family members, and 523,000 Vietnamese refugees, immigrants, and parolees from the reeducation camps came to the United States. Additionally, over 89,700 Amer-Asian children with accompanying family members were also admitted. In 2003, Vietnamese LPRs numbered 832,765.⁸⁶ Twenty to twenty-five thousand refugees came and stayed in the New Orleans area. In fact, before the diaspora caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, New Orleans had one of the largest concentrated communities of Vietnamese Americans living in any one area of the country,⁸⁷ essentially re-creating their villages in the Mississippi River delta of Louisiana.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ The United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, France and Canada.

⁸⁶ "Refugee Admissions Program for East Asia." United States Department of State (January 16, 2004): 1, accessed March 24, 2015, www.state.gov/g/prm/rls/fs/2004/28212.htm.

⁸⁷ "The Asian Peoples of South Louisiana." University of New Orleans, Center for the Pacific Rim, Western European Studies Section (WESS), (1990): 1, accessed April 28, 2014, http://wessweb.info/index.php/Imigration,_Ehtnicities_and_Historical_Research_in_New_Orleans#Asian.

⁸⁸ Strat Douthat, "May Be Nation's Most Intensely Vietnamese Community: Refugees Re-Create Mekong Villages in Mississippi Delta." *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 1988. Accessed March 31, 2015. <http://articles.latimes.com/print/1988-12-18/>.

Vietnamese Refugee Settlement in the New Orleans Area

How did the New Orleans Vietnamese phenomenon begin? When Saigon fell in 1975, the Archbishop of New Orleans, Philip Matthew Hannan, S.S. — a veteran of World War II⁸⁹ — visited the refugee camp at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, and subsequently enlisted the aid of Catholic Charities of New Orleans to help with resettlement efforts of Vietnamese Catholics seeking asylum in America. In a 1988 *Los Angeles Times* article, Associated Catholic Charities Director of Resettlement and Immigration Services Jane Foley said that the archdiocese sponsored 1,000 refugees during the summer of 1975,⁹⁰ and many more were sponsored in the ensuing years.

The Village de L'est area of New Orleans was the predominant destination of the first New Orleans Vietnamese immigrants. The climate and industries (fishing and farming) in the New Orleans environs were similar to that which the Vietnamese were accustomed, so the refugees felt comfortable about at least some aspects of their relocation.⁹¹ Most of the refugees who came to New Orleans (only five percent spoke English) owned nothing but their clothes when they arrived. The refugees initially occupied housing in the Versailles apartment complex that was covered by a “very low income” rental voucher program, and the Vietnamese enclave came to be known as the “Versailles Community.” Its religion was essentially Catholic,⁹² and in 1986 the area saw the establishment of Mary Queen of Vietnam, the first Catholic church in the United States to offer mass in Vietnamese. The church operated not only as a place of religious practice, but as a meeting place for social and community functions as well.

⁸⁹ Hannan served as chaplain in the 82nd Airborne Division in Belgium during the Ardennes Offensive. After the war ended, Hannan assisted with the liberation of Wöbbelin Concentration Camp.

⁹⁰ Douthat.

⁹¹ Douthat.

⁹² The refugees in New Orleans included both South and North Vietnamese. As mentioned earlier, the partition of Vietnam into north and south had allowed for a migration in 1954 and 1955 of northern Catholics and non-Communists who sought religious and political asylum in the south. For the North Vietnamese, then, the relocation to New Orleans constituted the second time they had to leave their homes, family members and possessions. Vietnamese refugees in Village de L'Est originated mostly from villages southeast of Ho Chi Minh City in the vicinity of Vung Tau and Phuc Tinh, in the Ba Ria-Vung Tau province.

Other refugees and their descendants came to occupy housing in the city itself, and on the west bank of the Mississippi River, in the communities of Algiers, Gretna, Harvey and Avondale, Louisiana.⁹³ Among these immigrants were many solitary Vietnamese men — mostly ex-military men.⁹⁴

Vietnamese Vietnam War Veterans

In many ways, the post-war experiences of Vietnamese soldiers paralleled those of American military men: reflections of the violence of the war tormented them, they were displaced, they had difficulty reintegrating into society. And, those still in a war-torn Vietnam faced the uncertainties and vagaries of a new regime.

In Vietnam, both the winners and losers experienced desolation. Victorious Communist troops were eventually allowed to return home to village life and participate in the rebuilding of a united nation. But returning northern veterans, already having suffered isolation from their families (some had been away from home since the mid-1960s), were not allowed by the Communist government to immediately integrate, or take part in village politics, for fear that ex-soldiers would enjoy status and power as war heroes. According to the *Encyclopedia of the New American Nation*, “[o]ver the next two decades, the veterans fared poorly and received paltry rations of rice, meat, and cigarettes in compensation for their war service.” Even more so than American veterans, “Vietnamese veterans were largely forgotten by the government.”⁹⁵

⁹³ Robert Butler, *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 2. A demographic pattern began to emerge, and New Orleans East became predominantly populated by immigrants from North Vietnam, and the West Bank became the home of immigrants from South Vietnam.

⁹⁴ Philip Hannan, *The Archbishop Wore Combat Boots: Memoir of an Extraordinary Life* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2010), 305. Single Vietnamese males initially occupied a majority of the many vacancies at the old Claiborne Towers apartment building on Canal Street until they could establish housing of their own.

⁹⁵ www.americanforeignrelations.com/O-S/The-Vietnam-War-and-its-Impact-Vietnamese-veterans.html.

One can find the dead who served with the victorious North Vietnamese military in the “martyr” cemeteries located in both South and North Vietnam, and memorialized in imposing national monuments. The defeated South Vietnam military’s dead, if identified, claimed and

Martyrs’ Cemetery at Cai Lay
(near HCMC)



Figure 3, © 2015 Catherine B. Haws

Monument at Dong Xuan Market
(in Hanoi)



Figure 4, © 2015 Catherine B. Haws

American War Monument
(outside Hanoi)



Figure 5, © 2015 Catherine B. Haws

returned for interment, were relegated to the private burial places of their families or their home villages. The Republic of Viet Nam monuments were promptly dismantled after the end of the war, and its dead have no official spaces of commemoration in Vietnam.⁹⁶ The surviving veterans of the vanquished army,⁹⁷ numbering five million (including 500,000 disabled vets) at the end of the war, faced difficult choices. Of the approximately 145,000 Vietnamese who fled Vietnam in 1975, approximately 33 percent were South Vietnamese veterans who chose to immigrate to the United States.⁹⁸

Those veterans who fought against the Communists and stayed in Vietnam were forced into land redevelopment projects (called New Economic Zones) in rural areas.⁹⁹ The South Vietnam veterans who were deemed more dangerous were detained and sent to reeducation

⁹⁶ Schwenkel, 108.

⁹⁷ The ground forces of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) military existed from 1955 until the Fall of Saigon in 1975. Over 50 percent of the officers were drafted and graduated from Thu Duc Reserve Officer School; fewer were volunteers who attended the RVN Military Academy in Dalat.

⁹⁸ “Report to the Congress on the Interagency Task Force on Indochina Refugees,” (December, 1975), v, accessed March 21, 2015, https://archive.org/stream/indochineserefug19unit/indochineserefug19unit_djvu.txt.

⁹⁹ Many of these veterans (approximately 100,000) and their families were among the “Boat People” who later sought refuge in the United States.

camps.¹⁰⁰ Estimated at 300,000, the number included army officers, civil servants, teachers, Catholic clergy, journalists, doctors, engineers, and political activists. “Reeducation” entailed confessions of perceived crimes against Vietnam, readings on American imperialism and Vietnamese socialism, and — for higher officials and those who resisted — torture. South Vietnamese soldiers were eligible for political asylum beginning in 1988 through the Orderly Departure Program, and by 1997 tens of thousands of veterans had taken advantage of the opportunity. American and Vietnamese efforts secured the release of most of the remaining sixty thousand prisoners of war by 1990.

Even so, as an April 24, 1995 *Los Angeles Times* article titled “A Long and Lonely Struggle With Bitterness” recounts, the Vietnamese veterans in America still faced hardships. It mentions that “there is no black granite wall” where RVN survivors can “touch the past” and no parades to honor service to a country that no longer exists. They have no Department of Veterans Affairs or medical or psychological care to heal their old wounds. They have no pensions.¹⁰¹ “Often their children ... aren’t interested in knowing stories of a lost cause in a distant land. Seldom do they even share their common experiences with American veterans.” Culturally, the article claims, they are familiar with the “stoicism and silence of a soldier,” and the aging Vietnamese veterans “are mostly forgotten, except by one another.”¹⁰² In some areas of America,

¹⁰⁰ Most camps were located in rural areas of South Vietnam; the most threatening prisoners were sent to camps in North Vietnam and China, where slave labor was common. The U.S. estimated that at least fifty camps existed in the 1970s and 1980s. Many prisoners died from disease, starvation, and overwork.

¹⁰¹ Jimmy Nguyen (telephone) interview by author, Las Vegas, Nevada, July 7, 2015. When asked whether former Vietnamese soldiers had any source of income as a veteran, Jimmy Nguyen said, “[w]e receive no pensions ... we’re not like the Pilipino who ... Joe McCarthy when he went back to the Philippines, he vowed that one day when the war ended he would pay tribute to those and then allow them to receive ... We receive nothing ... but we [are] grateful for what America [is] giving us. We [are] not demanding or fighting to be equal to [the] American veteran. We have to distinguish ... those two. American veterans – to me, personally – they deserve those honors.”

¹⁰² H. G. Reza and Thao Hua, “A Long and Lonely Struggle With Bitterness: War Veterans of South Vietnamese army have few outlets to express the pain of their crushing defeat 20 years ago. ‘What did we fight for?’ one wonders.” *Los Angeles Times*: Los Angeles, CA. April 24, 1995. Accessed March 31, 2015. <http://articles.latimes.com/1995-04-24/news/mn-58297>.

the expatriates congregate at Vietnamese veterans' associations meetings. There are such associations for each branch of the RVN service (army, navy and air force) in the New Orleans, Louisiana area.

Honoring Vietnamese Vietnam War Veterans' Service

On April 25, 1985, the New Orleans City Council unanimously agreed to a resolution introduced by (then) Councilman-at-Large Sidney J. Barthelemy¹⁰³ that stated it was fitting to set aside a day to honor South Vietnamese soldiers who fought alongside American soldiers and sacrificed their lives in defense of their country. The resolution states that while thousands of Americans perished throughout the conflict, more than one million South Vietnamese soldiers died. The Council declared that Sunday, June 16, 1985, would be "Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Day" in New Orleans.¹⁰⁴ Part of the formal observance included a banquet in the Napoleon Room of the New Orleans Hilton Hotel the evening of Saturday, June 25th, where former South Vietnam Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky delivered an address, and a ceremony at City Hall the next day honoring veterans of both the U.S. armed forces and the former Republic of Vietnam.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Sidney John Barthelemy (Democrat) was member-at-large of the New Orleans City Council from 1978 to 1986. He had previously served as a member of the Louisiana State Senate (1974-1978) and from 1986-1994 was mayor of New Orleans, the second African American to hold the New Orleans mayoral seat.

¹⁰⁴ "Official Proceedings." New Orleans City Council, Resolution R-84-195, *Times Picayune/States Item* (New Orleans, LA). May 23, 1985.

¹⁰⁵ "Vietnamese vets to be honored." *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA). June 14, 1985.

The story of one of these veterans proved particularly relative to this research. Jimmy Nguyen¹⁰⁶ fled Saigon in 1975. His first stop, where he was granted political asylum, was the U.S. territory of Guam. From there he was sent to Florida for resettlement. A young reporter from the *New Orleans States Item*, Jim Amoss,¹⁰⁷ was interviewing refugees there — in French. He published a story that caught the eye of a political science student at the University of New Orleans, Roger Piper.¹⁰⁸ Piper had served two tours in South Vietnam, where he had become friends with Jimmy Nguyen, and he recognized Nguyen's photograph. Piper called the refugee camp and volunteered to be Jimmy Nguyen's sponsor, then drove through the night of May 4, 1975, to Valparaiso, Florida to claim Nguyen and his companions.¹⁰⁹ Jimmy Nguyen was effectively New Orleans' first resident refugee. Later, as Founder of the Vietnamese Veterans Association, Nguyen was the point man in the establishment of the Vietnamese communities' own version of a tribute to the Vietnam War. The Vietnam Veterans Monument on Basin Street serves as a visible marker of the Vietnamese soldiers' presence in the New Orleans community.

¹⁰⁶ Nguyen Tong Son, aka. Jimmy Nguyen was a corporal in the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam Armed Forces when he volunteered to join the Special Ops as an Airborne Ranger in 1968. According to the *Las Vegas Review Journal*, the U.S. government paid his salary from 1970 until 1972. In 1975 Nguyen fled Vietnam and landed at Eglin Air Force base in Florida. Nguyen subsequently settled in New Orleans, and graduated from the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Training Academy in 1980. In 1985, Nguyen founded the Vietnamese Veterans Association in New Orleans. In 1986 Nguyen joined the New Orleans Police Department Reserve Division, and was named New Orleans' first International Specialist and Liaison with the Asian American community. In 1990 Nguyen moved his family to Orange County, California and established a consulting firm. In 1992, Nguyen made an unsuccessful political bid for a city council seat, an attempt that could have made him the first person of Vietnamese descent to be elected to U.S. public office. (Interestingly, another member of the New Orleans Vietnamese community earned that distinction: Anh "Joseph" Quang Cao, who served as U.S. Representative for the 2nd Congressional District of Louisiana from 2009-2011.) Mr. Nguyen is retired from business, but is active in the national Special Operations Association where he serves on its Board of Directors and as Chairman of the Reunion and Entertainment Committees.

¹⁰⁷ Jim Amoss is now Vice President of Content and Editor of the *Times-Picayune*, NOLA.com and MardiGras.com.

¹⁰⁸ Roger Piper retired from the US Immigration & Naturalization Service in 2002 after over 27 years of government service, directing programs and/or offices in New Orleans, Chicago, Indianapolis, and Houston. Since then, Mr. Piper has worked as the Director of Security at Baylor College of Medicine; Security Program Advisor to the Constellation Program at NASA; and as an independent consultant to the Department of Homeland Security. <http://www.grwpc.com/roger-piper/>.

¹⁰⁹ Newspaper articles indicate a party of five: Jimmy and his "wife" Lang, their 7-year-old daughter, and Lang's parents; in an interview with the author on July 7, 2015, Nguyen described Lang as his "then-girlfriend."

The Vietnam Veterans Monument

On the Basin Street median, at the point where it intersects with Iberville Street, stands an 18-foot pyramid-shaped, polished blue pearl granite tribute — the first monument in the United States meant to honor both the Vietnamese and American veterans who served in the Vietnam War. “Part of the reason we’re alive is because they helped us,” according to Spencer Campbell, a former United States Marine. “We were together then and we are together now,” he said.¹¹⁰

On the monument’s south face, in Vietnamese lettering (each word forming a circle) appear the words “THAN KINH TRI AN” — “Remember With Deep and Sincere Gratitude.”¹¹¹ On the western face is the English inscription, “IN MEMORY OF THE AMERICAN AND ALLIED FORCES WHO BRAVELY FOUGHT AND SACRIFICED DURING THE VIETNAM WAR”; on the northern face, similar wording honors Vietnamese soldiers in their native language, “THANH-KINH TRI-AN NHUNG CHIEN-SI ANH-HUNG QLVNCH SA VI-QUOC VONG-THAN DE BAO-VE CHINH-NGHIA TU-DO TAI VIET-NAM.”¹¹²



Figure 6

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The remaining face bears the inscription (in both English and Vietnamese), “THIS MEMORIAL MONUMENT WAS ERECTED IN JUNE 1987 BY THE VIETNAMESE VETERANS ASSOCIATION NEW ORLEANS WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN BANK & TRUST CO.”

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Eig, “Monument a reminder to veterans.” *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), May 1, 1988.

¹¹¹ Translation by Bachyen and Viet Nguyen (see Footnote 113) and edited by the author.

¹¹² Missing extensive diacritical marks.

The unsigned, geometric obelisk measures approximately 14 feet by six feet by six feet, and stands on an elevated pedestal approximately 22 inches high and 16 feet in diameter. The obelisk design is significant in Vietnamese culture; according to Viet Nguyen,¹¹³ monuments of that shape¹¹⁴ are often found in his birth country. He conjectured on its meaning, “maybe everything for one point. Freedom. Everything you fight for and they [died] for ... one point ... freedom.”¹¹⁵

This monument’s design was the brainchild of Jimmy Nguyen, president of the Vietnamese Veterans Association at the time:

I could see that idea of everybody [coming] to Vietnam from different directions of the world – north, south, east, west. And ... the highest point of the monument symbolizes the unity of all – [coming] together to preserve liberty and freedom for that part of the world.

Asked if the monument at the Superdome had influenced his idea to build the Vietnamese monument, he answered, “No, [they are] totally independent of each other ... I already conceived the idea of the Vietnamese monument from the Vietnamese community many years before.” Nguyen noted, “[i]t was our war ... our responsibility ... but we don’t forget the people who were there with us.”¹¹⁶

Engraving the four triangular stone sides – particularly the Vietnamese symbols and spelling – was a challenge for the contractor, Peltier Construction Company of Gretna, Louisiana.

¹¹³ Nguyen Hoang Viet, aka. Viet Nguyen was a 20-year old medical student when he was drafted into the South Vietnamese Navy in 1972. Nguyen was an officer on the RVNS Ky Hoa (HQ-09) coastal gunboat, operating in the Third (Blue Water) Coastal Zone when he fled Vietnam with the Third Coastal Zone Fleet on April 29, 1975. He is now a manager for a national retailer and lives in Harvey, Louisiana with his sister, Bachyen Nguyen, a retired nurse-midwife and degreed social worker.

¹¹⁴ Schwenkel, 113. Many Vietnamese monuments were styled after the colonizing French’s memorials: “in Post World War I France, the obelisk was by far the most common memorial constructed, most likely on account of its low construction cost.”

¹¹⁵ Viet Nguyen interview by author, Harvey, Louisiana, June 7, 2015.

¹¹⁶ Jimmy Nguyen interview.

Nguyen said the work took several trials to perfect, but it was important to be precise, “that writing will stay on for many years.”¹¹⁷

The obelisk is surrounded by a walkway and bordered by a concrete wall, originally painted red and white, but now painted grey with a light blue balustrade, which contains a garden space. On the Canal Street side of the edifice stand three flagpoles bearing the flags of the United States, Vietnam, and Louisiana. The monument is well maintained by the New Orleans Vietnamese Veterans’ Association.¹¹⁸ Accessibility is somewhat limited: public parking in the area is restricted; reaching the monument requires crossing a busy thoroughfare on foot.

Like the monument in Washington, D.C., this edifice was not without its logistical challenges. The monument was originally allocated for the neutral grounds of Alcee Fortier Boulevard at Saigon Drive in eastern New Orleans, in the midst of a predominantly Vietnamese neighborhood. But on the recommendation of Councilman Johnny Jackson, Jr.,¹¹⁹ there was a change of location to the New Orleans Central Business District. Nguyen remembers that Councilman Jackson reasoned that New Orleans East was a flood-prone area, and high water circumstances could compromise a monument’s foundation in that location. Nguyen said Mayor Sidney Barthelemy expressed the view that the Iberville and Basin intersection would be a good location because there were numerous other monuments along the Loyola Avenue-Basin Street corridor. Nguyen welcomed the recommendation, because the monument would have far greater exposure in a downtown location. So the plans were redrawn and resubmitted to the New

¹¹⁷ Jimmy Nguyen interview.

¹¹⁸ On August 28, 2015, during a meeting attended by Vietnamese Veterans Association New Orleans officers Phu Nguyen (navy), Ho Huynh (air force), and Quan Huynh (army), as well as Jimmy Nguyen and the author, discussions began regarding the establishment of a perpetual maintenance fund for the monument.

¹¹⁹ Johnny Jackson, Jr. was councilman of District E from 1986-1994, and also a member of the City Planning Commission at the time. Unfortunately, Councilman Jackson’s records are not among the “Records of the City Council Members” archived at the New Orleans Public Library.

Orleans City Planning Commission and City Council. Nguyen said that, fortunately, his committee met with no resistance or objection to the monument or its new placement site.

The nationwide Vietnamese-American community raised \$60,000 to fund the classically abstract structure. Having gathered some of the expected cost of the project, Jimmy Nguyen signed a pledge with the American Bank & Trust Company on behalf of the Vietnamese Veterans Association to construct the monolith.¹²⁰ “They did it all themselves,” according to Dave Ludwig, who said that when he was fighting in the jungles of Vietnam, he never imagined the contributions Vietnamese would make to American communities. [They] “are doing more for the Vietnam vets than anybody,” he said. At the groundbreaking ceremony in 1978, Henry Phan, a Biloxi, Mississippi, restaurant owner who served in the South Vietnamese air force, said the monument honors his countrymen as well as Americans, and will remind Vietnamese children about the war and its heroes.¹²¹ Henry Phan’s widow, Tina Phan (a Biloxi businesswoman), says the monument also serves to remind refugees of the privilege of freedom they enjoy in the United States while many of their former countrymen are living under Communism.¹²²

The groundbreaking ceremony took place at 10 a.m. June 27, 1987. The Honorable Lindy Boggs,¹²³ (then) Louisiana State member, U.S. House of Representatives, offered remarks, noting that the vast outpouring of emotion occurring daily at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., indicates the depth of feelings that need release for both healing and restoration.

¹²⁰ Jimmy Nguyen interview.

¹²¹ Eig.

¹²² Tina Phan meeting with the author, Biloxi, MS, July 27, 2015.

¹²³ Marie Corinne Morrison Claiborne “Lindy” Boggs (1916-2013) served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for Louisiana’s Second Congressional District from 1973 to 1991, and later as United States Ambassador to the Holy See (1997-2001). She was the widow of former Majority Leader of the H.S. House of Representatives (d. 1972), Hale Boggs, and the mother of four children. The first woman elected to Congress from Louisiana, she was also the first woman to preside over a national party convention (the 1976 Democratic National convention in New York).

We [will] now have in New Orleans this memorial where we can reflect on the sacrifices and hardships endured by our Vietnamese Veterans ... and we can reflect on those who are our own who gave their last full measure of devotion in a dedicated and difficult effort.¹²⁴

The morning event was followed by civic activities organized by the Vietnamese veterans to pay tribute to American veterans who fought for their cause. According to the *Times-Picayune*, leaders of American veterans' groups said it would be the first time that the Vietnamese community in the United States offered such a thank you.¹²⁵ At the time it was dedicated, about 5,000 South Vietnamese and 22,000 American veterans of the Vietnam War were living in the New Orleans environs.¹²⁶

That evening, a banquet was held at the Rivergate Convention Center¹²⁷ with Gen. William C. Westmoreland,¹²⁸ commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam under President Johnson (1964-68), and former South Vietnamese Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, former Air Marshal of the South Vietnamese forces and later Vice President of South Vietnam (1967-1971)¹²⁹ in

¹²⁴ Lindy Boggs, "Dedication of Vietnam Veterans Memorial, June 27, 1987, Brief Remarks." Louisiana Research/Manuscript Collection, 1000 (Tulane University): Series 2: Lindy Boggs – Sub-series 4: Speeches – Box 2082 – Folder 35: Speeches, June 27, 1987 Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

¹²⁵ Coleman Warner, "Viets will honor vets with parade." *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), March 19, 1987.

¹²⁶ Coleman Warner, "Vietnam refugees, veterans to march." *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), June 25, 1987.

¹²⁷ Coleman Warner, "Viets will honor vets with parade" *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), March 19, 1987. Approximately 600 veterans attended the banquet, about two-thirds Vietnamese and one-third American.

¹²⁸ William Childs "Westy" Westmoreland (1914-2005) was a United States Army general, educated at the Citadel and the United States Military Academy at West Point, graduating with highest honors in military proficiency. During World War II he saw combat in Tunisia, Sicily, France and Germany. In 1964 he became Deputy Commander of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, and in 1968 was promoted to Army Chief of Staff, serving in that capacity until 1972. Westmoreland ran unsuccessfully for governor of South Carolina in 1974, and published his autobiography the following year.

¹²⁹ Nguyen Cao Ky (1930-2011) was a member of the French forces that opposed the Vietnamese liberation movement. When Vietnam was partitioned in 1954, Nguyen joined the South Vietnam Air Force, attracting attention for his anti-Communist stance, and became a favorite of U.S. advisers in Vietnam. After the overthrow of the Diem government, Ky was named commander of South Vietnam's air force, and with U.S. aid, Ky built a fighting force of 10,000 men. In June 1965, Ky helped lead a coup to unseat Premier Phan Huy Quat, and in 1967 became vice president of the succeeding regime. When South Vietnam fell, Nguyen Cao Ky fled to the United States, where he lectured and promoted his books, *Twenty Years and Twenty Days* (1976), *How We Lost the Vietnam War* (1976) and *Buddha's Child: My Fight to Save Vietnam* (2002). <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/413607/Nguyen-Cao-Ky>.

attendance. Preceding the banquet, a news conference was held with Nguyen Cao Ky and Westmoreland. Controversial remarks came from the former Vietnam Vice President, who said that hope was still alive for a free Vietnam, “[t]hey are waiting for us in North Vietnam.” According to *Times-Picayune* reporters, Nguyen said he and other members of the Vietnamese military had a plan for the “recapture of the country, including destabilization through military, economic and political means,” and they were asking for American support. Nguyen asserted, “[w]ith our own experience from the past, we will go directly to the people of America.”¹³⁰

Nguyen joined Westmoreland, the report went on, in “condemning leaders in Washington and on the college campuses of the 1960s who ... betrayed American fighting men and women.” Nguyen said, “[i]t is regrettable it took America 12 years to welcome you home.” A “Welcome Home” parade of American and Vietnamese veterans that started at City Hall and went through the Central Business District followed the next morning.¹³¹

Jimmy Nguyen’s memorial concept was realized after three years of planning, fund raising, and construction.¹³² “To us, this is some sort of Thanksgiving,” Nguyen said.¹³³ When the monument was finally completed and in place in downtown New Orleans, it was dedicated at 10:30 on a rainy Saturday morning, the 30th of June, 1988. Among the luminaries at its inauguration were General Nguyen Cao Ky, New Orleans Mayor Sidney J. Barthelemy, Jefferson Parish Sheriff Harry Lee, and Biloxi, Mississippi Mayor Gerald Blessey.¹³⁴ It was punctuated by a 21-gun salute by a Louisiana National Guard unit and a fly-over by A-10 fighter

¹³⁰ Daniel Carey and Reed Branson. “Ky dreams of a free Vietnam.” *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA) June 28, 1987.

¹³¹ Carey and Branson.

¹³² “Dedication April 30 for monument.” *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), April 28, 1988.

¹³³ Eig.

¹³⁴ According to Jimmy Nguyen, it was the intention of Mayor Blessey to install an identical monument on the Gulf Coast in Biloxi, Mississippi. On July 27, 2015, two authorities at the Biloxi, Mississippi Visitors’ Center, one of whom was Mayor Blessey’s secretary (retired), assured this author that no such monument was ever realized.

jets from the Belle Chasse Naval Air Station. Also among the 200 or so people in attendance were visiting groups from Biloxi, Mississippi and Port Arthur, Texas.¹³⁵

The 1978 dedication date was tied to the 13th anniversary of the fall of Saigon. The ceremony began with trumpets sounding out American and Vietnamese versions of “Taps.” Both the Vietnamese and American national anthems were played, and the flags of both countries were raised. Both the Vietnam Veterans Association and the Vietnamese Veterans Association made presentations and laid wreaths. In both English and Vietnamese, Nguyen made a single point: “We are here to gather for one simple reason: to say thank you.”¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Eig.

¹³⁶ Eig.

Chapter 5: Comparisons and Contrasts of the New Orleans Vietnam War Structures

Both these monuments are outdoor sculptures dedicated to the same historical event and erected for similar purposes. They are both located within city of New Orleans, and both were built with private funds, but they are also dissimilar several ways as well.

	Style	Sponsorship	Location	Cost
Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Superdome)	Modern/Hyper-realistic	American Vietnam War veterans, and Louisiana corporate, organizational and private sponsors	High volume of foot traffic, but not in a setting for serious contemplation	Approximately \$325,000
Vietnam Veterans Monument (Basin at Iberville)	Classical/Abstract	Vietnamese American War veterans and organizations, American war veterans and other national contributors	Awkward access, but not impossible to stop and consider	Approximately \$60,000

Figure 7

They differ in representation and interpretive value. The memorial at the Superdome is meant to honor the Louisiana citizens who participated in the Vietnam War; the monument on Basin Street commemorates the combined efforts of the United States, Vietnam and other allies in their pursuit of freedom and represents the mix of loss and gratitude felt by Vietnamese expatriates throughout the Deep South of the United States.

The Superdome memorial, with its life-sized figures, tablets with history of the war, and relevant inscriptions, is evocative of the difficulties, hardships, horrors, costs and consequences of armed combat. It is instructional by its very design. The classic obelisk on Basin Street, though customary for monuments of its type, seems in comparison abstract, vague and passive, and does not reveal realities of the conflict, or the great losses (family and friends, home and country, property and possessions) experienced by the members of the expatriate Vietnamese community. There is a lesser opportunity to learn from the mere appearance of this edifice.

It must be noted that when building their monument, the Vietnamese veterans had a broader agenda, and no less a sense of its importance, but a smaller budget, and fewer resources available at the time. Nguyen said the Vietnamese monument, comparatively, is “a tiny gesture,” but one that speaks of the Vietnamese community’s sincere thankfulness for opportunities not only during the war, but afterwards as well.¹³⁷

Other objectives of the two edifices were similar. In 1984, William Ryan said he felt the memorial at the Superdome put his and his colleagues’ experiences into historical perspective: “[t]his is not supposed to be a complete fulfillment of the needs of veterans,” but, Ryan said, it gives recognition for what was done. “And yes,” Ryan noted, “we are part of history, whether we like it or not.”¹³⁸ “The idea is that we can educate people through this memorial so that something like Vietnam will never happen again.”¹³⁹ Recently interviewed, Ryan says that unfortunately, this objective failed; he felt that something similar to Vietnam is happening again with Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁴⁰

In 1987, Nguyen observed, “[t]he outcome of Vietnam has really divided the American public. To us, it’s shameful because the American servicemen performed well. They did what they were supposed to do as soldiers, and we respect them for that.”¹⁴¹ Recently asked if he thought the Vietnam War impacted American policies, Nguyen laments, “I don’t think, forever, America will learn the lesson of Vietnam ... [w]e continue to engage ourself ... without knowing what we’re gonna do after the war, or ... how we gonna leave that war ... without creating a vacuum of power.”¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Jimmy Nguyen interview.

¹³⁸ Litwin.

¹³⁹ Eig.

¹⁴⁰ Ryan interview.

¹⁴¹ Warner.

¹⁴² Jimmy Nguyen interview.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the 1980s, the Vietnam War structures were symbols of shared grief in its many forms. When new, the American memorials helped diffuse the reaction of Vietnam veterans to the national cold shoulder many experienced when they came home. Veterans needed release from a social purgatory shaped by the war and changes on the home front during and after the conflict. Jan Scruggs identified this need; with The Wall he provided a way for alienated Vietnam War veterans to find relief and for other Americans to take part in the recovery. The New Orleans monuments carried this mission to many veterans in the local region.

Years have passed, new knowledge has emerged, and society has changed, as has the interpretations of the war's history. Other conflicts and wars — some of a similar nature — have followed the Vietnam experience. At present, the Vietnam War veterans' monuments serve to recognize the people who participated in or were affected by the conflict, and primarily demonstrate that many Americans are continually willing to honor their soldiers, no matter how unpopular the military action and regardless of success.

Recent interviews help put the structures into current perspective. Retired career U. S. Army Staff Sergeant John Rice,¹⁴³ though in no way involved with the establishment of the Superdome monument, says he is gratified that it was built. He said that for years Vietnam War veterans would meet each other with the greeting, “[w]elcome home,” because “the public didn’t do it.” Rice said the memorial reflects his feelings about the veterans’ comradeship. The memorial complex, Rice acknowledged, is comprehensive in its coverage of the war, but he feels that unless a visitor is a “history buff,” viewing monuments do not improve the understanding of

¹⁴³ John Charles Rice, a native New Orleanian, was a member of the Honor Guard at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C., and served in Central Vietnam in 1968 as an aerial observer and gunner on Bell UH-1 helicopters. After his Army career, Rice went into New Orleans law enforcement as a capital crimes investigator. He is now retired and volunteers at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans.

war or its implications. He affirmed, however, that any monument to the common soldier serves a historical purpose.¹⁴⁴

Vietnamese expatriate Leon Nguyen expressed a similar thought in connection with the Vietnamese monument in New Orleans, which he considered while functioning as advisor for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial established in 2013 in Orlando, Florida.¹⁴⁵ He said the New Orleans edifice is “[a] focal point ... [for] those who are willing to look into it.” He added, “[i]t is for education, to help the young people know why they are here, and what their forefathers tried to do. It will tell our history for years to come.”¹⁴⁶

Pierre McGraw, of the Monumental Task Committee, Inc. of New Orleans,¹⁴⁷ points out that people need monuments, “so we have tangible reasons to tell the stories of the past — to inspire, learn and grow as a city and nation.”¹⁴⁸ In discussing the subject of this paper with a cross section of New Orleanians, however, only a small percentage knew that the monuments existed or where they were located; information on the structures is scattered and sometimes difficult to unearth. A heightened awareness of the monuments and their history is required for the two New Orleans Vietnam War veterans’ structures to better realize their potential historical usefulness. This project is offered to prosper that goal.

¹⁴⁴ John C. Rice interview by the author, New Orleans, LA, July 29, 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Nguyen Xuan Son, aka. Leon Nguyen was a career South Vietnamese Fleet Commander (Third Blue Water Coastal Zone) when Saigon fell. U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Spencer Matthews sponsored Nguyen and his family when they came to the United States in 1975. After reeducation in American colleges, Nguyen worked as an information technology engineer, retiring from both IBM and a second career with a Tampa, Florida computer firm. Nguyen now lives in St. Petersburg, Florida.

¹⁴⁶ Leon Nguyen (telephone) interview by the author, St. Petersburg, Florida, June 7, 2015.

¹⁴⁷ The Monumental Task Committee, Inc. is a volunteer-run organization that preserves, restores and maintains many of the historical monuments in the New Orleans area.

¹⁴⁸ Pierre McGraw, invitation to ‘Monumental Solutions’ public forum. August 19, 2015.

The New Orleans Vietnam War veterans' monument and memorial will endure as markers of that event in American history. With recognition and understanding, the veterans' structures *can be* historically useful. Through the New Orleans monuments, both dead and living Vietnam War veterans have been remembered and honored for their service, and history — perfectly or imperfectly — has been served.

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Interview Release Form

In consideration of the History Department thesis project by Catherine Bourg Haws underway at The University of New Orleans to collect and preserve the history of the Vietnam Veterans Monument located at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome (formerly Louisiana Superdome), today I agree to be interviewed, photographed, filmed and/or tape-recorded. My participation in this study is voluntary.

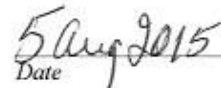
I understand that all materials resultant from this interview, whether in tape, manuscript, electronic, film, digital, or any other form, may become the property of the University of New Orleans and/or another appropriate repository, which will have the right to accession these materials into their libraries and archives, where they will be made available to scholars and the public for research, educational, exhibition, program, and presentation or promotional purposes. I know that this may result in public presentations, including radio and television broadcasts and publication on websites and other media.

Any listener or reader of the transcript of this recording should bear in mind that this is my spoken, not my written word. This agreement does not preclude any use that I may wish to make of the content or expressions contained in this recorded memoir.

Narrator: Donald W. Doyle, Jr., Esquire
c/o Blanchard and Company, Inc.
909 Poydras Street, Suite 1900
New Orleans, LA 70112
T: 504-837-3010



Signature of Narrator



Date

Interview Release Form (Revised)


In consideration of the History Department thesis project by Catherine Bourg Haws underway at The University of New Orleans to collect and preserve the history of the Vietnam Veterans Monuments located within the city of New Orleans, I agree to be interviewed and tape-recorded. My participation in this study is voluntary.

I understand that all materials resultant from this interview, whether in tape, manuscript, electronic, film, digital, or any other form, may become the property of the University of New Orleans and/or another appropriate repository, which will have the right to accession these materials into their libraries and archives, where they will be made available to scholars and the public for research, educational, exhibition, program, and presentation or promotional purposes. I know that this may result in public presentations, including radio and television broadcasts and publication on websites and other media.

Any listener or reader of the transcript of this recording should bear in mind that this is my spoken, not my written word. This agreement does not preclude any use that I may wish to make of the content or expressions contained in this recorded memoir.

The entire content of this interview cannot be used in whole or in part for any commercial or for profit purposes without my written consent or authorization.

Narrator: Jimmy Tong Nguyen
P.O. Box 621288
Las Vegas, NV 89162



Signature of Narrator



Date



Interview Release Form

In consideration of the History Department thesis project by Catherine Bourg Haws underway at The University of New Orleans to collect and preserve the history of the Vietnam War Veterans Monuments, I agreed to be interviewed, and tape-recorded on June 30th, 2015. My participation in this study is voluntary.

I understand that all materials resultant from this interview, whether in tape, manuscript, electronic, film, digital, or any other form, may become the property of the University of New Orleans and/or another appropriate repository, which will have the right to accession these materials into their libraries and archives, where they will be made available to scholars and the public for research, educational, exhibition, program, and presentation or promotional purposes. I know that this may result in public presentations, including radio and television broadcasts and publication on websites and other media.

Any listener or reader of the transcript of this recording should bear in mind that this is my spoken, not my written word. This agreement does not preclude any use that I may wish to make of the content or expressions contained in this recorded memoir.

Narrator (please print)

Name Xuan-Son "Leon" Nguyen

Address 3422 COQUINA KEY DR. SE. St. Petersburg, Florida 33705

Telephone number(s) 727.898.9051 (H); 727.688.3422 (C)

Leon for N/Leon
Signature of Narrator

9/25/15
Date



Interview Release Form

In consideration of the History Department thesis project by Catherine Bourg Haws underway at The University of New Orleans to collect and preserve the history of the Vietnam Veterans Monuments located within the city of New Orleans, today I agree to be interviewed, photographed, and tape-recorded. My participation in this study is voluntary.

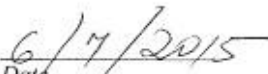
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Any listener or reader of the transcript of this recording should bear in mind that this is my spoken, not my written word. This agreement does not preclude any use that I may wish to make of the content or expressions contained in this recorded memoir.

Narrator: Viet Nguyen
1032 Teakwood Drive
Harvey, Louisiana 70058, USA



Signature of Narrator



Date




Interview Release Form

In consideration of the History Department thesis project by Catherine Bourg Haws underway at The University of New Orleans to collect and preserve the histories of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial located at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome, and the Vietnam Veterans Monument located on the median of Basin Street at the intersection of Iberville Street, today I agree to be interviewed, photographed, filmed and/or tape-recorded. My participation in this study is voluntary.

I understand that all materials resultant from this interview, whether in tape, manuscript, electronic, film, digital, or any other form, may become the property of the University of New Orleans and/or another appropriate repository, which will have the right to accession these materials into their libraries and archives, where they will be made available to scholars and the public for research, educational, exhibition, program, and presentation or promotional purposes. I know that this may result in public presentations, including radio and television broadcasts and publication on websites and other media.

Any listener or reader of the transcript of this recording should bear in mind that this is my spoken, not my written word. This agreement does not preclude any use that I may wish to make of the content or expressions contained in this recorded memoir.

Narrator: John Charles Rice
11145 Peaks Avenue
Walker, Louisiana 70785
T: 225-243-6244 (h); 504-909-1072 (c)



Signature of Narrator

9/2/15

Date



Interview Release Form

In consideration of the History Department thesis project by Catherine Bourg Haws underway at The University of New Orleans to collect and preserve the history of the Vietnam Veterans Monument located at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome (formerly Louisiana Superdome), today I agree to be interviewed, photographed, filmed and/or tape-recorded. My participation in this study is voluntary.

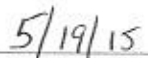
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Any listener or reader of the transcript of this recording should bear in mind that this is my spoken, not my written word. This agreement does not preclude any use that I may wish to make of the content or expressions contained in this recorded memoir.

Narrator: William F. Ryan, Esquire
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3350 Ridgelake Drive, Suite 111
Metairie, LA 70002
T: 504-836-2811



Signature of Narrator



Date

VITA

Catherine Bourg Haws traveled and relocated with her family in her early years, as dictated by her father's United States Air Force career, until they settled in the New Orleans environs. She attended Louisiana State University in New Orleans, studying English and education. Her studies were interrupted by her marriage and the birth of her only child. She subsequently divorced. While working full-time, she resumed her education, achieving degrees in Business Administration and Organizational Science (*cum laude*) from Loyola University in New Orleans. She has held positions in oil-related industries, banking institutions and in the legal arena, performing administrative, journalism and management functions. Now retired, she is continuing her education in history at the University of New Orleans.