

**Welcome Home- Paul B. –Post Historian
American Legion Post 11-11, May - 2013
THE VIETNAM WALL, Part I**



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was founded by Jan Scruggs, who served in Vietnam from 1969-1970 as an infantry corporal in the 199th Light Infantry Brigade. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial fund is a nonprofit charitable organization that was incorporated on April 27, 1979 by a group of Vietnam veterans.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial fund lobbied congress for a two acre plot of land in the Constitution Gardens. Significant support came from two U. S. Senators; Senator Charles Mathias, jr. and Senator John W. Warner, both Senators served in the Navy- in WWII. President Jimmy Carter signed the legislation for the memorial site; it took three and a half years to build the memorial and orchestrate a celebration to honor and salute those who served and died in Vietnam along with the MIA's (Missing in Action) soldiers. The Memorial Wall was designed by Maya Ying Lin, who was born in Athens, Ohio in 1959. Maya was an undergraduate student at Yale University. She desired to create a park within a park, with the walls to have a mirror-like surface (polished black granite) to reflect the images of the surrounding trees, lawns, monuments and visitors. Currently, at last count there are 58,272 names listed on the wall.

The black granite was purchased from Bangalore, India, one of only three locations in the world that the Veterans Memorial Fund could obtain black granite in a large quantity. All cutting and fabrication of the black granite was performed in Barre, Vermont. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc. raised nearly \$9,000,000 million dollars entirely through private contributions from corporations, foundations, veterans and civic organizations. No federal funds were used in the construction of the wall. On October 13, 1982, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts approved the addition of the flag staff to the Memorial site, the flag staff and American Flag was paid for by contributions from the American Legion.

The Memorial Wall was completed in late October 1982, and dedicated on November 13, 1982. The Vietnam Memorial Wall attracts approximately 1.5 to 2 million visitors each year. About five years ago I had the opportunity to visit the Memorial Wall, as a Vietnam Veteran I cannot express my thoughts and feelings as I passed by the thousands of names of brave men and women who paid the ultimate price called freedom for a small country half way round the world. On the obverse side of the Vietnam Wall this unforgettable message is inscribed for all to see "FREEDOM IS NOT FREE"