

Vietnam Memorial – The Wall That Heals

By Henry M. Holden

The Vietnam Memorial (The Wall), in Washington, D.C., stands as a symbol of America's honor and recognition of the men and women who served and sacrificed their lives in the Vietnam War. Three million Americans served during the war and inscribed on the 10-foot high black granite walls are the names of more than 58,200 men and women who gave their lives or remain missing; more than the Korean, War, Iraq War and Afghanistan War combined.

The Memorial was dedicated on Nov. 13, 1982, 35 years ago, and attracts more than 5.6 million visitors each year.

On The Wall, there are 1,487 names of New Jersey men and one N.J. woman, Capt. Eleanor Grace Alexander, of Westwood. But, the passing years are making it harder to remember their names. They came from almost every county and from towns such as Budd Lake, Morristown, Caldwell, Wayne, Short Hills and Long Valley.

The war touched thousands of N.J. families, and every Veteran's Day they remember a husband, wife, uncle, brother, sister,



Photo courtesy of VVWMF (Vietnam Veterans Wall Memorial Fund).

a loved one or an old friend. The Wall insures that their names will not be forgotten and will be etched in stone forever.

The Wall often brings closure to those who knew a name on the wall, and to some survivors, the thought of how bless-

ed they are.

"The number of names was and remains incomprehensible," says Army veteran Rich Reck of Randolph. "I felt and still feel a deep sense of gratitude for their and

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their families' sacrifices. As a fellow veteran, I realize it was by the grace of God that my name isn't on that Wall."

Jan Scruggs, a Purple Heart Vietnam veteran, created the vision of the memorial. "It would help veterans heal," he said. "Its mere existence would be societal recognition that their sacrifices were honorable rather than dishonorable. Veterans needed this, and so did the nation. Our country needed something symbolic to help heal our wounds."

Vietnam Memorial Wall designer Maya Lin, was a 21-year-old Yale student when her proposal for the black stone monument won the largest design competition in American history. In fact, she beat her art teacher's submission. Lin was born in Athens, Ohio, several years after her parents fled Chi-

na due to its Communist takeover in 1949.

Although she designed an apolitical monument, the politics of the Vietnam War could not be avoided. Some veteran's groups decried the lack of patriotic or heroic symbols often seen on war memorials. But the admirers of the Wall far outnumber the critics.

"I was passing Washington, and took a detour to visit the wall," said one Marine veteran from Randolph who did not want to give his name. "The reverence shown by the visitors so moved me. It was as if I was visiting a holy place. While some people were taking pictures, or making rubbings, they all showed a quiet respect."

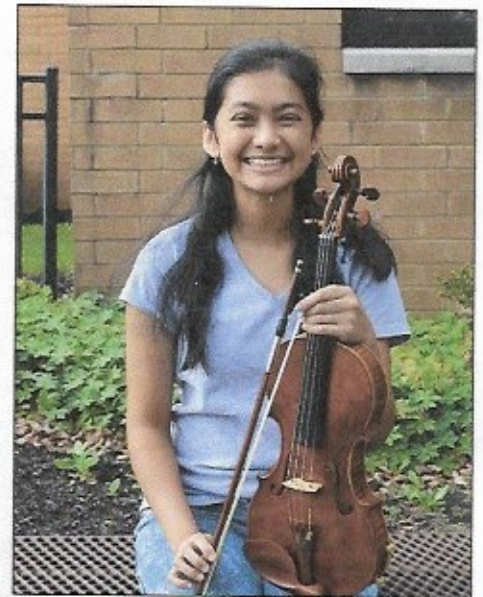
For those of us who have visited the wall it is a memorial one will never forget. For many it unlocks memories, and begins the healing process.

Super Stringer:

Mayo Student Of The Month

Randolph High School freshman Priscilla Peters was named a string student of the month at the Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown.

Priscilla attended the Oct. 26 performance by Jake Shimabukuro at the arts center. She was a member of the North Jersey Junior Region Orchestra last year and successfully auditioned for the Advanced String Ensemble at RHS called Arietta. "She is a wonderful example to all of the



students how to be a team player and make things better for those around you rather than only focusing on

yourself," said RHS Orchestra Director Eric Schaberg. "She is a wonderful young string player."