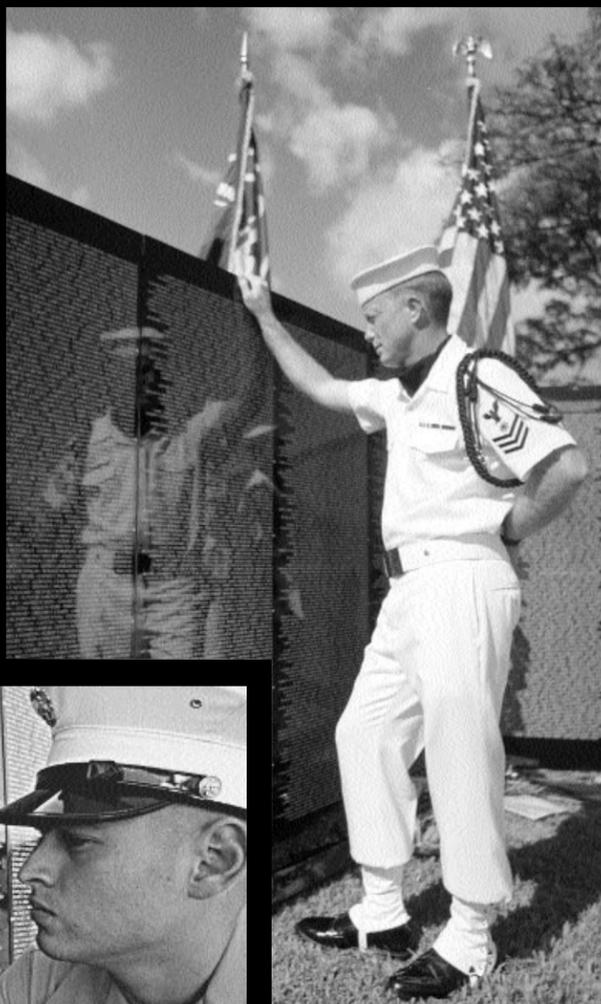


# '...never forgotten...'



(Top left) Vietnam veteran, former Navy Chief Gunner's Mate Joseph Fryar takes a rubbing of a friend's name. (Above right) QM1 Emrick Bailey pauses to look at the 'Moving Wall.' (Above) PFC Ismael Cortez takes a closer look. (Left) MU2 Rudy Flores plays 'echo taps' at the Vietnam Veterans Moving Wall opening ceremony. (Right) A Sailor points at one of the 58, 213 names on the wall. (Below) The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Moving Wall made many different impressions on its visitors. This man took a private moment to kneel.



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Many visitors mourn the loss of a relative or a friend. Nearly three decades after the conflict, some are still coping with that grief.

"It should have been my name there on the wall," said a tearful Arturo Dumlaio, a former Army Ranger advisor in the 2nd Corps, 122nd Ranger Battalion.

He pointed, then slowly touched the gray-colored name of his friend, Jesse Piles. "He took my place," Dumlaio continued, wiping tears as they emerged from beneath his dark sunglasses.

"He took my night guard duty watch for me one night. About an hour later, we were attacked and his position was overrun. It should have been my name on the wall."

As he still battled coping with his loss, Dumlaio's story was a mix of sadness and joyful remembrances.

"I remember it like it was yesterday," Dumlaio recalled. "We used to laugh and joke a lot, like servicemembers do. We used to talk about getting together after we got back [stateside], but he never came back. I still don't know why I came back, I should be there with him."

Still wiping tears, Dumlaio turned and moved on to make a rubbing from the wall of another friend who also didn't make it back.

"I feel guilty that I made it home and so many others didn't," said former Navy Chief Gunner's Mate, Joseph Fryar.

"My friend, Gordon Uhler, was killed in a gun mount explosion.

"Visiting the wall has given me the opportunity to recognize my shipmates and my friends.

That has made me feel a little better about myself."

There were many stories like these told at last Friday's opening-day ceremony and countless more untold throughout the morning at Pearl Harbor's Arizona Memorial Visitor's Center. Many grieved in their own way, trying to put closure on the conflict that took a friend or loved one. Others felt a sense of gratification that our servicemembers were being honored in this manner.

"To me, this is the epitome of the Armed Forces honoring our cherished warriors who gave their lives in the most honorable manner - in the defense of democracy," said Boatswain's Mate 1st Class (EOD/DV/PJ) Dana Seigel, Naval Station Pearl Harbor Honor Guard leading petty officer. "Our children and children's children can gratefully enjoy what I believe these men and women held close to their hearts - that's freedom, honor, courage and liberty."

"The honor guard team and I can't thank the veterans [who died] and those still among us enough for what they've done for the preservation of freedom for the free world."

Glints of sunlight reflected off a red, metallic bracelet, worn by "Moving Wall" volunteer Linda Matthew, while she assisted memorial visitors. On the bracelet, etched in white letters, was the name of a Navy Seaman, Raul A. Guerra, missing since Oct. 8, 1967. Approximately 1,300 servicemembers are still missing in action and are unaccounted for.

"I wanted to remind myself that the Vietnam War is not a dead issue," Matthew said. "There are many servicemembers still missing in action

that haven't been accounted for. It feels good to see people who made connections at the wall, bringing closure to a part of their lives, but there's more that needs to be done."

"I saw a name that could have been my grandfather's," said Army Sgt. Carlos Guevara, Schofield Barracks military police. "I was wondering if that was him, because he was never found."

"I'm glad they brought the wall here. The closer I get to the wall, the closer I get to the memory of him - it may be as close as I'll ever get. I take pride in seeing the wall. It says that the American people won't forget what was done by these servicemembers."

Vietnam veteran Thomas H. Aki, left a lei and a note at the memorial wall, written to his buddies who didn't come home and to those who did. Leaving it at the base of the memorial, carefully placed in a plastic cover, he left it for everyone.

It read, "For all my family, friends and classmates on the wall. As children, we grew up together with hopes, dreams and thoughts of enjoying the rest of our lives with friends and loved ones, but our country called and we answered. Some of us made it back and others didn't. We will always carry the memories of those who didn't. You will never be forgotten and we will never let others forget the ultimate price for freedom."

There will be a closing ceremony for the "Moving Wall" at the Arizona Memorial Visitor's Center grounds Memorial Day, May 31, at 6 p.m. The memorial will be open to the public 24 hours a day until then.

photos by  
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