

Vietnam Veterans Day

Saturday March 25, Vietnam Veterans Day will be celebrated at the West Fargo VFW from noon to 5pm. Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 941 will perform Color Guard ceremony at noon. Joe Wallevand, VVA 941 member will be guest speaker. Free beer and Chili will be served. All Vietnam Veterans, families and friends are invited.

I've been to the Vietnam Veterans wall in Washington, D.C. several times, with a group, alone and with a friend. Several years ago, I was planning a trip to D.C. and called my friend Hank to see if he was free for sightseeing. I told him I'd like to see the wall and there was a long pause and finally he said "I have to see it sometime, it is best with a friend." We did and it was a very moving experience the first time and every time since. I did a bit of research on the wall and its design and here is what I found.

On April 27, 1979, four years after the Fall of Saigon, The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc. was incorporated as a non-profit organization to establish a memorial to veterans of the Vietnam War. Much of the impetus behind the formation of the fund came from a wounded Vietnam veteran, Jan Scruggs. Eventually, \$8.4 million was raised by private donations.

The Memorial (wall) was designed by an undergraduate at Yale University, Maya Ying Lin, born in Athens, Ohio in 1959. Her parents fled from China in 1949 when Mao-Tse-tung took control of China, and she is a native-born American citizen, a child of immigrants.

She wanted to create a park within a park - a quiet protected place onto itself, yet harmonious with the overall plan of Constitution Gardens. The walls have a mirror-like surface (polished black granite) reflecting the images of the surrounding trees, lawns, monuments, and visitors. The walls seem to stretch into the distance, directing us towards the Washington Monument, in the east, and the Lincoln Memorial, to the west, thus bring the Vietnam Veterans Memorial into a historical context.

The competition garnered more than 1,400 submissions, so many that an Air Force hangar was called into service to display all the entries for the judging. Since all submissions were anonymous, the eight-member jury made its selection based solely on the quality of the designs. It ultimately chose entry number 1026, which it found to be "an eloquent place where the simple meeting of earth, sky and remembered names contains messages for all." There was controversy over the design. Some people pulled their support, including H. Ross Perot.

The memorial design earned her a B at Yale. However her design was chosen over 1,400 others including a design submitted by her professor.