

Vietnam Wall Memorial, July 20, 2008

written by Kay Winburn Seale

I just finished my four-hour shift at 'The Vietnam Wall.' I was there from 7:30-12:00.

Yesterday, I found out that my 'reader position' (to read names on the Wall) had been changed to a 'Tent volunteer.' As a Tent volunteer, I helped guide people and give them information about the Wall. You can bet that after four hours of learning all about its history and how to find what I was looking for, I'm



quite an official now. However, I did get to read names for 20 minutes and appreciated that very much. The 58,256 names of those who made the ultimate sacrifice will be read throughout the three days the Wall will be open to visitors.

My time spent with visitors to the wall was quite precious as I learned their thoughts and feelings, relived some of their experiences in Vietnam, learned about their friends who didn't come back, learned about family members currently deployed in Iraq/Afghanistan, and who were looking for their friend's name on the Wall. As the evening

wore on, little memorials began to appear under the various panels. Things like framed pictures, folded notes, letters, flowers, a Marine flag, a six-pack of beer with one can empty and one can gone, a package of cigarettes, with a note, other flowers, and other notes and letters. None of the items will be removed from the memorial. Upon placing the items on the memorial they become a permanent part of the memorial. When the Wall is taken down, the mementos will be gathered and kept in a place of honor.

Names on the Wall are arranged in chronological order of the date of casualty, beginning at the apex (center) of the wall and the year 1959. The year at the end of the east wall is 1968. The continuation of counting the years wraps around to the west end of the west wall beginning at 1968 and meets at the apex at the year 1975. So 1975's panel is next to 1959's panel for the complete range of years.

Panel numbers are on the bottom of every panel. On the edge of every other panel are white dots every 20 lines. So, you look for the name in the reference book or computer to get the panel, go to the panel and find the line. Diamonds in front of the name means they were killed in action. Crosses in front of the names means they were/are MIA. Once you find the name you can do a "rubbing" by holding a piece of paper on top and rubbing a pencil across the paper. Quite a few people did that as well as took pictures.

When the memorial entered CO, 200-400 (at any given time) bikers formed a procession, from Limon all the way to Boulder. Bikers will also form a motorcade when the memorial leaves CO. They have provided a color guard to stand in front of the memorial for all of the time that it is here. The Wall will go to a city in FL (Sarasota Springs, I believe) where it will be on display, for three days. Then it will be allowed to rest before it goes on tour again.

I have seen the Wall in Washington, DC several times. The experience to feel, touch and experience the power of the Memorial first hand is unbelievable. It is just as emotional here in Boulder as it was there.

There were many comments made by people, of differing opinions. Having the right to make those comments is ensured by the many men and women who served our country in a time of conflict. I'm certain that, for anyone visiting the Wall today, it has changed their lives at least a little. While we are enjoying our daily pleasures there are others out there fighting for our freedoms. Please don't ever let them be forgotten.

That is my day's activity. I wouldn't have traded it for anything.

P.S. The celebration will continue all day Saturday (Native American Ceremony Honoring All Veterans), Sunday (Closing Ceremony) and the Wall will be dismantled on Monday, by the CU football team and CU's ROTC, for a few.

Stephanie and Jeff, bet you didn't know that Dr. Steinhauer served at the US Naval Hospital, Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, from 1965-1966. For the next 13 months he was in a field hospital near Danang, South Vietnam. He was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal for the treatment of war inflicted facial injuries and for establishing a rehabilitation program for Vietnamese children. And to think...he pulled your wisdom teeth!