

NEWS – August 3, 2016 – Robert Whale

American-Vietnamese War Memorial to be site for healing wounds opened by war



Auburn's Jeff McIntyre, a U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam War, accepts a pin and a hug from Lan Phan Jones, co-president of the American-Vietnamese War Memorial Alliance, during a dedication ceremony for the site of a joint memorial at Les Gove Park last Saturday. The alliance is raising money to build the war memorial in the park.

— *image credit: Robert Whale, Auburn Reporter*

A concrete memorial and honor wall with a sculpture at the center, benches, and the United States flag and the Vietnamese Freedom and Heritage flag snapping crisply in the wind.

With these words inscribed on the wall in English and Vietnamese: “We remember with gratitude the soldiers and allies of the United States of America and the Republic of Vietnam who fought and died for freedom and democracy in Vietnam.”

All to recognize and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, and to express thanks and appreciation for those who fought for the freedom of South Vietnam.

Last Saturday, the sun shone on the memorial's dedication in Les Gove Park and on the more than 100 people who came to see it happen.

“Beautiful day, beautiful location, and a beautiful idea that’s now coming to fruition,” said Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus. “I can’t think of a better way to honor the men and women who so very bravely served during the Vietnam War.”

Backus noted that too many servicemen and women met with hostility upon their return from Vietnam, and that the memorial is one way to salve old wounds.

In 2013, when many local veterans objected to the proposal to raise the memorial in Veterans Memorial Park, the Auburn City Council agreed the memorial would be better placed in Les Gove Park

Tung Trinh, president of the Vietnamese American Community in Seattle and South King County, explained what it will mean to have it.

“After the war, the communists destroyed all the statues, memorials of the South Vietnam Army. So this is the only country that allows us to have things like this, to honor the sacrifices of our military,” Trinh said.

Alfie Alvarado, director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and herself a veteran of the Vietnam War, explained the purpose.

“It’s really important that our Vietnam veterans know that they are appreciated. After everything that we went through and were subjected to, this memorial right here in Auburn will let them know that they are citizens of a grateful state and a grateful city,” Alvarado said.

The WDVA provided the Vietnam service pin to more than 50 veterans who attended the dedication.

The hope is that within a year or two, visitors will find the memorial along the trail that twists around the interior of Les Gove Park, on the east side of the park, between the bocce courts and King County Housing.

But first, the American-Vietnamese War Memorial Alliance has to come up with the estimated \$150,000 it will take to build it.

The alliance launched its fundraising campaign on Memorial Day weekend, starting with the sale of about 1,000 tiles for \$100 a piece. It will inscribe those tiles in memory of people who fought in the war or of those who supported the cause, then place them at the rear of the monument, next to a sitting wall.

Alliance members and City staff worked side by side for the last 2½ years to complete the design, which shows a rounded, concrete plaza 30 feet across, circled by an arching wall 4½ to 5 feet high, flanked by two flag poles.

The U.S. Flag Code dictates that American flag fly slightly higher than the Vietnamese flag, and in this case, the stars and stripes will fly six inches higher.

Donations may be made online through the “Donations” page, www.honorvietnamvets.org/ or sent to: American-Vietnamese War Memorial Alliance, 3405 172nd St. NE #5, Box 367 Arlington, WA 98223.

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