



LETTER TO THE EDITOR – October 9, 2013 – Mike Sepal

Auburn should join other cities, welcome joint memorial

I would like to comment on Jesse Jose's guest opinion ("War memorial has divided us," Auburn Reporter, Sept. 27) where he stated: "... the idea of building this war memorial at the Veterans Park is dividing us and creating bad feelings within our ranks."

The correct name for this "Veterans Park" in Auburn is "Veterans Memorial Park," with the emphasis on "Memorial."

According to Webster's Dictionary, a memorial is "something designed to preserve the memory of a person, event, etc., as a monument or a holiday." The main purpose of the proposed joint American – Vietnamese war memorial is to preserve the memories of those who fought side by side for freedom and democracy in Vietnam.

Mr. Jose also stated: "We all have varied memories of that war. Most of them, if not all of them, were memories, that I am sure, we all want to forget."

But not all "memories" should be forgotten. Those who survived the Vietnam War have a duty to "preserve the memory" of those who served, especially those fallen heroes who paid the ultimate price. There are 58,229 names of U.S. service members honored on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The South Vietnamese armed forces lost over 250,000 during the Vietnam War.

Following the "Fall of Saigon" on April 30, 1975, the Communist regime, in a terrible act of retribution, desecrated the military cemeteries in South Vietnam. The desecration of these military cemeteries of the South Vietnamese armed forces is one of the reasons for establishing joint Vietnam War memorials in U.S. cities, since the war memorials and monuments in Vietnam today only honor those who fought on the communist side.

Some of the U.S. cities that have joint Vietnam War memorials are Arlington, Texas; Wichita, Kan.; Orlando, Fla.; and Westminster, Calif. These memorials are "well received" in their communities and serve as "places of honor" to remember those fallen heroes: American, Vietnamese and allied forces who fought for freedom and democracy in Vietnam.

Lam Q. Thi, a former general in the South Vietnamese army, stated the importance of preserving the memories of their fallen heroes during the dedication ceremony of the joint Vietnam War memorial in Westminster, Calif., on April 30, 2003:

"Ladies and gentlemen: There is a saying that people can die twice: the day of their death and the day when their memories fade away with the passing of time. By dedicating this War Memorial today in Westminster City, we are determined to make sure that our fallen heroes will not have to die a second time."

Hopefully, the City of Auburn, known for having the largest Veterans Day Parade west of the Mississippi, will join the ranks of other cities across the U.S. and approve the proposed joint American – Vietnamese war memorial, helping to ensure that the memory of those who fought for freedom and democracy in Vietnam will be honored and preserved.

– Mike Sepal