



# *Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial*

**Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial “Duty to Remember” Campaign**



## **FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS**

The Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial is truly one of city’s hidden treasures. For veterans, it recalls the 646 Philadelphians who lost their lives in one of the most protracted conflicts in American history. For many others, the Memorial goes unnoticed and rarely is a visitor’s destination.

In large part, this stems from the enclosed nature of the Memorial, a reflection of the special reverence sought by Vietnam veterans who often believed their service was either ignored or slighted. The design as envisioned by original architect Perry M. Morgan was an enclosed amphitheater that facilitated the sanctity veterans sought but created other problems scarcely imaginable at the time.

The secluded Memorial also served to breed vandalism and vulgar behavior that desecrates this hallowed ground. Constant vigilance by the police can only do so much to stop those who would deface the memorial, use it as a recreational area or to hide their inappropriate activities.

Opening the Spruce Street side of the Memorial would not only expose and deter these shameful acts, but would also create a more accessible and inviting Memorial for the

general public. In time, Vietnam veterans, just like their Korean and World War II brethren, will fade away and it will be important for new generations to discover and appreciate anew the sacrifice of these noble Americans.

### **“IT’S OUR DUTY TO REMEMBER”**

The Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (PVVMF) in 2007 launched a “Duty to Remember” Campaign to raise \$2 million for the preservation and protection of the Memorial. As part of that campaign, a steering committee was formed with honorary chairs and Vietnam veterans, Ronald J. Naples, then-president and CEO of Quaker Chemical, and current Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chief Justice Ronald D. Castille.

The campaign coincided with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Memorial and through a vigorous promotional effort a total of \$500,000 was raised. Contributors included philanthropist Gerry Lenfest, PECO Energy Company, Board of Directors of City Trusts and city trade unions, as well as city and state grants. The Philadelphia Daily News provided major in-kind support by preparing a multi-page insert on the Memorial and running an ad campaign to raise funds in the wake of the October rededication. In addition, the PVVMF has partnered with the Philadelphia Foundation, to develop a planned giving program.

### **PROJECT SCOPE**

The money raised to date will fund the first phase of the project, which is to repair and reconstruct after 20 years of wear from water and weather, not to mention man-made damage from skateboarders and others. In addition, it will permit engineering and architectural work to proceed for the redesigned site.

The Board initially worked with the architects of Granary Associates, of Philadelphia, who developed options to address those issues and illustrate how other similar Vietnam Memorials across the country were constructed. In all cases, the Memorials were much more open, inviting and conducive for visits.

As a result, Cope Linder Architects of Philadelphia was retained on a *pro bono* basis to prepare a design which envisions opening up the wall of scenes fronting on Spruce Street by rolling back the center of the wall to create channels and steps to lead into the amphitheater of the current Memorial. This would not only make the Memorial more inviting to visitors and enhance security, but it also would provide a strong focal point for the wall of 646 names, which will remain undisturbed from the original design.

Other improvements include the addition of flag poles representing each of the Armed Services, new lighting, landscaping and a new security system. A prominent feature at the rear of the site will for the first time honor POW/MIAs so that their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

The Fairmount Park Commission on September 10, 2008 approved the Memorial redesign, which was first introduced at the October 2007 rededication and formally unveiled during Memorial Day ceremonies in 2008 at the site. It has been displayed at several venues, including a public meeting held to discuss the design with area residents and veterans, who also have been informed through the PVVM web site and a newsletter.

## **THE SITE**

The Memorial is located at Front and Spruce Streets at Penn's Landing on an overpass atop the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway (I-95) across Columbus Blvd. from the Delaware River. The amphitheater, with facing walls of polished, charcoal grey granite, features on the south side a semi-circle containing the 646 names raised on a higher plane than the north wall comprised of 10 panels, including depictions of eight famous war photographs sandblasted into the granite.

Between both walls are four raised levels with granite ledges and brick paving, leading up to the north wall bearing the names of those whose “home of record” was Philadelphia. The symbol of the memorial is inscribed in granite in front of the south wall. Four-foot-high raised planters of granite at each entrance complement the site.

### **THE MEMORIAL FUND**

The Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (PVVVMF) is a registered 501 (c) 3 organization that is administered by a Board of Directors, elected annually and composed primarily of Vietnam combat veterans. The Fund was formed to protect and ensure the preservation of the Memorial. The PVVVMF partners with Fairmount Park in providing oversight of the site, which is part of the City’s park system.

### **CREATION OF A MEMORIAL PARK**

An ancillary effort under consideration by the Board in conjunction with this project is to work closely with the Korean War Memorial across Spruce Street to make the surrounding area a Memorial Park or some other form of a destination for visitors. Across Columbus Blvd. are the USS Olympia and the Columbus Memorial. Nearby are the Beirut Memorial and the Irish Memorial.

### **HOW YOU CAN HELP**

Contributions to the campaign are accepted through a number of ways by visiting our web site at [www.pvvm.org](http://www.pvvm.org), contacting the Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund at 213 N. Fourth St. Philadelphia, PA 19106 or by calling 215-576-1216. Corporate sponsorships, individual donations and planned giving options also are available.