

I have written roughly one hundred Military Heritage Chronicles over the last decade, covering a wide variety of eras of military disciplines. A few of those have dealt with the Vietnam War, which I always struggle with, as I did not serve there, or then, when many of my friends and acquaintances did.

Last year's April Chronicles was one such article, as it covered the growing number of memorials to our Vietnam Veterans, scattered around the nation, and particularly the state of Oregon. And, it was also timed to coincide with the newly established national holiday, National Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day, on March 29th of each year. So it is only appropriate that I re-visit the topic as we approach that date again, particularly when we had the Oregon Memorial Traveling Wall dedicated to our state's Vietnam Vets, visit Florence this past December, and anticipate the arrival of "The Wall That Heals" in April.

The Wall That Heals being brought to Florence by Spruce Point Assisted Living & Memory Care is one of several replicas of the original Wall in Washington DC We have had variations of the Wall come to Florence twice in the past. This one coming in April is a different version at three-quarter scale and 375 feet in length. Its only 2019 appearance here in Oregon includes a 53' Mobile Education Center which displays multiple elements of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund programs, such as items left at the actual Wall in D.C. On Saturday April 6th at 1:00 p.m., members of the various Veteran Service Organizations here in Florence will conduct a remembrance ceremony which I encourage the entire community to attend.

Despite and in contrast to our society's response to our returning Vietnam Veterans at that time in the 1970's, the Wall memorial in our nation's capital was created in the early 1980's to honor the more than 58,000 Americans who died in that war. Since then, over 400 names have been added as well. It is one of the most visited memorials in our nation's capital.

There are nearly a half-dozen traveling wall replicas of the Wall, and multiple state and local memorials to the service of those brave Veterans in existence as well, and they are growing with two more being created here in Oregon as you read this – Medford and Salem.

I personally have never visited the Wall in DC, nor any traveling replica. I have heard multiple stories from friends and acquaintances over the years who have visited, and there is a common theme in what they have experienced and witnessed: many Vietnam Veterans who do experience a healing. That certainly lends itself to the visiting wall's name.

There is another theme, or common saying, in our society – "its never too late" or "better late than never". There is no greater application of those statements than today with the growing number of tributes to recognize the over-due recognition of the service and sacrifice of our Vietnam-era Veterans.

Remember to thank our Vietnam Veterans on March 29th, their official recognition day. And I encourage you to visit The Wall That Heals when it is here in Florence, to witness that healing impact it has on our Vets. And tell them "Welcome Home".