

Vietnam War fatalities rate a picture in time

By Gary Peterson

Contra Costa Times

POSTED: 02/18/2014 12:00:00 AM PST | UPDATED: 4 DAYS AGO



For her work in Contra Costa, Janna Hoehn enlisted the help of the VietNam Veterans of Diablo Valley. (COURTESY OF MATTHEWTHAYER)

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- [Photos needed for these Bay Area soldiers](#)

The first time Janna Hoehn visited Washington, D.C., she went to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Its simple power -- a black granite wall etched with the 58,286 names of U.S. service members killed in the Vietnam War -- left her in tears.

"As you're standing there, you realize your reflection is in this wall," said Hoehn, 58. "You're in there with the soldiers. It made me cry because it's so massive, so many names."

Now she's part of a project that aims to intensify the emotional experience by adding faces to the names. The Faces Never Forgotten project has collected photos for more than 33,000 of the names on the wall, via online submissions from family and friends and through the work of volunteers directed by the nonprofit Vietnam Veterans Fund in Washington, D.C.

The project is the brainchild of Jan Scruggs, a Vietnam veteran who founded the wall. Now he seeks to build an underground education center on the Washington Mall in which to display the photos. (Photos that have been collected are displayed at www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces.)

Legislation authorizing construction of the \$100 million education center was signed in 2003 by President George W. Bush. Scruggs said he has raised approximately \$15 million to date. Recently, Congress granted the project a four-year extension -- through 2017 -- to raise the additional \$85 million.

"We're talking to the right people in the corporate world," said Scruggs, an Army veteran who earned a Purple Heart in Vietnam. "We'll get it done. It will be powerful. We really want this to be done in a tasteful manner to inspire people to appreciate those who have given everything for their country."

Hoehn, a florist on the island of Maui in Hawaii, was part of the Faces Never Forgotten project before she knew it existed. Five years ago, on her visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, she traced a random name

-- MIA Gregory Crossman -- on a piece of paper. After returning home, her curiosity piqued, she searched online for any information she could find about her mystery service member. Her cousin was able to locate a photo.

"I put his picture in a scrapbook," Hoehn said, "and put the scrapbook away."

Then she heard about Faces Never Forgotten. She sent Crossman's photo to Scruggs, who wrote back asking if Hoehn would be willing to locate photos for the 42 dead or missing from her home island. She calls them the "Maui boys."

"What I thought would be a simple project was not," she said. "After six months, I had them."

Hoehn then volunteered to find pictures of casualties from Riverside County, where she grew up. Now she's searching Bay Area counties. She uses a number of tools. She started tracking down the "Maui boys" with a phone book. She visited high schools, scanned microfiche in libraries and pored through yearbooks. She got the final photo by knocking on a door in her neighborhood.

Now she works remotely, scouring the Internet and asking local newspapers to write about the project. Her cousin helps, using ancestry.com. **For her work in Contra Costa County, Hoehn enlisted the help of the [Vietnam Veterans of Diablo Valley](#).**

"I think we'll get most of the photographs," Scruggs said. "By the time we have the center built, we'll probably be in the 80 to 85 percent range. Once it's operational, and people come to see it, that's when we'll get the rest. There's probably one-half of 1 percent you can never get."

The photo Andy Holt cares most about is the one of his older brother, Raymond, who was killed in combat in the Binh Duong province of South Vietnam in 1970, two days after Christmas and 10 days after his 22nd birthday. Andy, Raymond and their three siblings grew up in Antioch.

Andy Holt, who enlisted in the Army with two buddies who were killed in Vietnam, likes the concept of Faces Never Forgotten.

"That sounds great," he said. "The men and women who served in Vietnam, and those who didn't make it back, had a (crummy) deal. It's not like our soldiers today, who come home to a warm welcome. It was just bad all the way around. This is a long time coming."

Contact Gary Peterson at 925-952-5053. Follow him at [Twitter.com/garyscribe](https://twitter.com/garyscribe).

To contribute a photo

If you have a photo of a friend or family member who was lost in Vietnam and wish to contribute it to the Faces Never Forgotten project, email it to Janna Hoehn at neverforgotten2014@gmail.com.

The Education center at the wall

To learn about the proposed Education Center at the Wall, go to www.vvmf.org.education-center.