

'Behind Each Name is a Face'

Each of the names inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the nation's capital are further memorialized with photos and remembrances on a web page.

Jan 04, 2023

Army Sgt. Marion C. Brown. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. John Louis Heiser. Army Spec. 4 Gerald James Szoszorek. These are just a few of the more than 58,000 names etched on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Now, thanks to the years-long efforts of volunteers and family members around the United States, the virtual Wall of Faces displays at least one photo of each of the 58,281 troops forever memorialized on "The Wall."

In August, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) announced that a photo of every person listed on the memorial can now be found by visiting www.vvmf.org/wall-of-faces. Additionally, a profile is linked to each photo. There is a section where comments and remembrances can be added by those visiting the page.

In a news release, VVMF President and CEO Jim Knotts highlighted the importance of this announcement.

"When VVMF began this effort, the goal was to put a face with a name for each of the 58,281 service members whose names are inscribed on The Wall," he said. "To ensure that visitors to The Wall understand that behind each name is a face — a person with a story of a family and friends who were forever changed by their loss. Today, the Wall of Faces tells these stories through photos and remembrances left by both friends and family members."

In 2001, the search for photos began. A more organized effort took off in the fall of 2009. Since then, hundreds of volunteers and family members have submitted photos for this endeavor.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial announced in August that it now has a photo for each of

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the 58,281 names on The Wall in Washington, D.C. Visitors to www.vvmf.org/wall-of-faces can put a face with a name and read about each of the men and women who were killed during the Vietnam War. The years-long effort to acquire photos was a joint effort of volunteers and family members.

The VVMF shared some of the volunteers' stories:

- Janna Hoehn started searching in 2011 with one photo that she had a connection to — the name rubbing she randomly made on her first visit to The Wall in Washington, D.C. She then started with the 42 fallen from Maui, Hawaii, where she lives. With that success, she moved on to her hometown in California and then the entire state. Soon after, she worked her way across the country. She grew a team of volunteers who joined her efforts. Hoehn made many of the emotional phone calls to family members to not only ask for a photo but to learn more about their lost loved ones. “I am proud of my work with this project and will never forget this time in my life,” Hoehn said.
- Herb Reckinger started looking for photos of Minnesotans in 2014. He worked with the Minnesota Historical Society as well as many city and school librarians. Once Minnesota was done, he moved on to other states. He continues his search for better photos for those with poorer quality photos. “While at a The Wall Heals stop, a local veteran asked me to find his friend’s name on The Wall,” Reckinger recalled. “I asked if he wanted to see his picture. After looking at his friend on the Wall of Faces, he had one sentence for me — ‘I forgot what he looked like.’” Another face remembered.
- Steve and Annie Delp began representing VVMF and the Wall of Faces at Vietnam unit reunions in 2013. It soon became evident that the attendees — Vietnam veterans and their families — wanted to help in gathering the missing photos. The Delps took on the mission of obtaining the photos, cleaning them up and adding them to the Wall of Faces. “At one point, a small Bible was left with us that had 30 names inside. Upon doing some research, it was found that 25 of the 30 names were KIA. I’m pleased to report that all 25 have at least one good picture now,” Steve said.

VVMF is still seeking higher quality photos and remembrances of these Vietnam veterans, Knotts said. For more information, visit www.vvmf.org or call 202.393.0090.

This article is featured in the 2023 January issue of VFW magazine, and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor for VFW magazine.