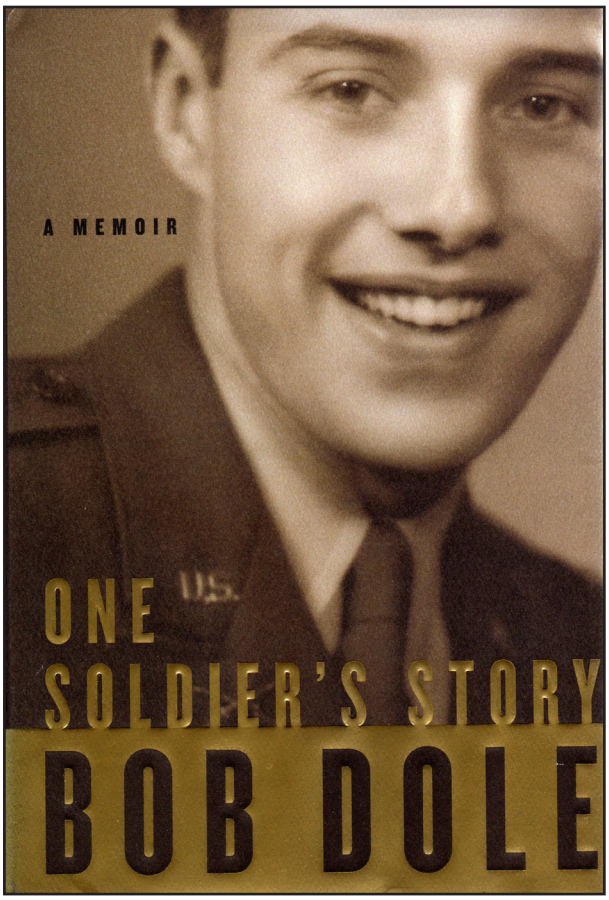
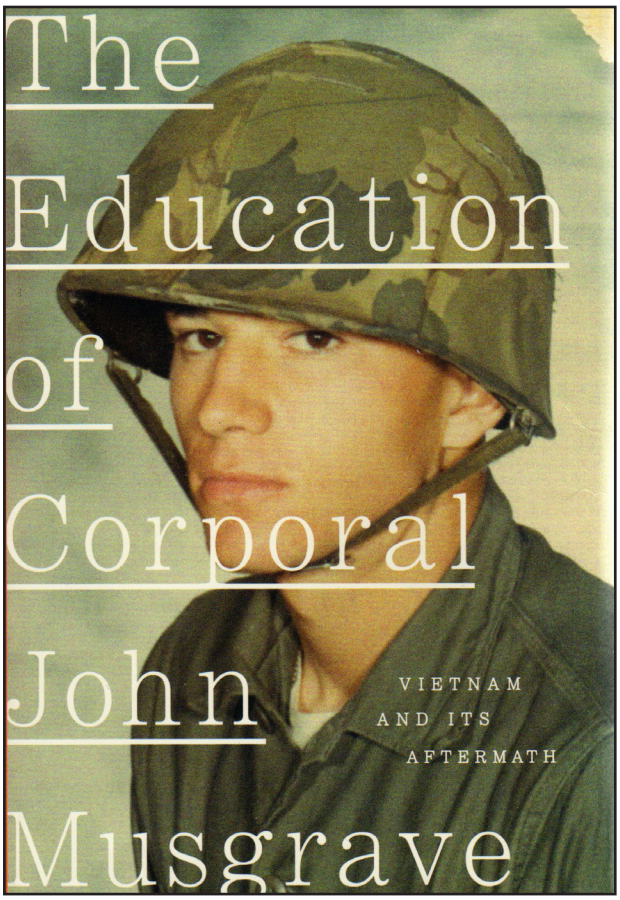
# MUZZLEBLASTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 83RD CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION VETERANS ASSOCIATION




# Two young combat-wounded soldiers in two very different wars

*Marsha Henry Goff—*

I recently finished two magazine articles: one about Bob Dole, a World War II hero who was grievously wounded at the age of 21 and another about John Musgrave, a Marine critically wounded at the age of 19 in the Vietnam War, who came home to a very different America than the one he had left a year before.

For the most part, war is a young man's job. In Musgrave's unit, dubbed The Walking Dead because of their high casualty rate, they were all 18 and 19 years old; the oldest man in their unit, a career Marine, was 22 and they called him "Pop."

I met Bob Dole when I was 12 and served as a page in the Kansas House of Representatives where my

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# A message from our president

*Sandy Babich*—

With being retired, I have seen that there seem to be so many nonprofit organizations that need volunteers.

For instance, locally all of the Elks clubs in this area have a Veterans committee, where once a month meals are served and they help set up homeless veterans in apartments and supply all that is needed from food to dishes, etc.

In my area, Pam Heinritz Kearns graduated a year before me and her husband, Jim was in the military and sadly passed from Agent Orange the same year as Ron. She is involved with the Special Forces, Chapter 42 where I live. It reorganized five years ago in this area so that many retired Special Forces Veterans in our area could be a part of this.

There was a small amount in their treasury and Pam offered to do fundraising for this Chapter. For example there was a Spaghetti Dinner with over 90 baskets donated. This reminds me of our reunion donations. The money raised helps the veterans in a number of ways. Donations from the fundraising went to a homeless shelter for veterans, programs for PTSD, veteran funerals, scholarship programs for the children and grandchildren of the vets, and helping to provide disabled veterans with equine therapy and service dogs.

There are numerous Chapters across the US, and even Chapters in other countries, such as Australia, Hawaii, Philippines, Iraq and Afghanistan. They fall under the Special Forces Association based out of Fayetteville, NC and they are a fraternal veteran's 501(c) 19 under the IRS, as a non-profit.

I recently learned of this group and thought if anyone is looking to volunteer in your area, you might check into this organization.

I wish you all a relaxing summer and thank Marsha for her dedication so we can have this form of communication.

Eternal memory to our loved ones and wonderful veterans.

Sandy


## *With Gratitude to our Generous Donors*

Because we are no longer having reunions where we raised money for the 83rd CMB, we are grateful for your continued support of Muzzleblasts.

*Elizabeth Daly*
*Ken Hopkins*
*Larry Strickler*


MUZZLEBLASTS

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*Muzzleblasts* is a publication of the
**83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion Veterans Association**

**1877 N 1000 Road**

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father Lew Henry and Dole were newly elected members. Both were young, handsome combat-wounded veterans. Dole's injuries were obvious; he was very thin and didn't have the use of his right arm.

He was wounded April 14, 1945, when his unit of the 10th Mountain Division moved through a valley under heavy machinegun fire. He was losing men and looked for his radioman to call for reinforcements. He found him, still clutching his radio, slumped over and covered in blood.

Dole crawled toward him intending to pull him into the safety of a shell hole when he was struck. Dole's men pulled him back behind a wall and his sergeant administered a dose of morphine and drew an M on his forehead, using Dole's own blood, so when the medics found him they would not give him another dose which might prove fatal. It was six hours before he was removed from the battlefield. Dole spent years in and out of hospitals and lost a kidney in the process.

Dad's wounds weren't obvious except for a scar on his right hand caused by a phosphorous shell. However, according to the neurosurgeon who removed the large and slow-growing benign brain tumor known to be caused by trauma, a head injury suffered during WW II caused my father's death at the age of 56. I have always thought it odd when something that kills you is referred to as benign.

Dole, Dad and other World War II veterans returned home to cheering crowds and deservedly so. Parades were held to honor their courage and sacrifice. They were greatly admired and respected. But that was not the case for veterans of the Vietnam War who were spat upon and called "Baby-killers."

This month, Musgrave, accompanied by his two sons, will return to Con Thien, Vietnam, where a machine-gun burst to the chest almost killed him. Indeed, three times in triage, he was pushed aside as a soldier who was dying. When he was helicoptered to Delta Med, the medic, believing he could not survive, pushed him under the seat of a side-gunner who held his hand all the way to Alpha Med, a larger hospital. "Every time I would start to fade, he would squeeze my hand and bring me back. I became so reliant on him that he had to get out of the plane with me still holding my hand."

When the surgeon at Alpha Med examined Musgrave, he asked him what his religion was and when he answered Protestant, the surgeon called for a chaplain, saying. "He's shot through the lungs or heart. I can't do anything for him." He was half right. The machine gun had taken out the top part of his left lung, vaporizing two ribs in the process.

As Musgrave lay on a stretcher with a chaplain praying at his head, a red-headed surgeon walked by and Musgrave, with a hole in his chest large enough to put his fist in, smiled and nodded at him. The surgeon halted and asked, "Why isn't someone helping this man?" Then he called for blood and a chest tube and began examining the young Marine. Once the blood that had collected in Musgrave's plural cavity was evacuated through the chest tube, Musgrave breathed easier and began to think he might make it.

He was flown to a larger better-equipped hospital in Vietnam where five surgeries were performed and when he was released from ICU, he was flown to Great Lakes Naval Station where the plane arrived in the wee hours to avoid the many people who waited there to throw objects and scream obscenities at the wounded being unloaded from planes. It was then that Musgrave realized there would be no hero's welcome for him. America had changed.

He was eventually transferred to Virginia where he worked on the weapons range in the morning and had physical therapy every afternoon for a full year. Out of the hospital's shelter, he was subjected to the treatment his fellow veterans of an unpopular war endured. "I was never spit upon, but people would spit on the sidewalk in front of me or yell 'baby-killer' from their cars."

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Hostesses in restaurants refused to seat him but his worst encounter was when a pretty young woman asked him if he had been wounded in Vietnam as he was waiting on a sidewalk in D.C. for a light to change. When he answered in the affirmative, she said, "You should have been killed over there!"

More than anything, Musgrave wanted to remain a Marine. He says he knew his injuries wouldn't allow him to be a "grunt," but he thought he might be able to serve as a helicopter side-gunner. But it was not to be. Over his strong objections, at the age of 20, he was labeled permanently disabled and medically discharged.

He enrolled at Baker University in Baldwin City, Kansas, where they seemed more likely to accept a veteran although other veterans warned him not to advertise he was a veteran which is exactly what he did when told that. He went home and came back to school wearing his jungle boots and jacket.

One day, when students from KU came to warn "Gunny" Musgrave — the tern "Gunny" was a compliment he said he didn't deserve — that KU's SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) were coming the next day to take down the flag, he stationed himself at the flagpole the next morning thinking he'd face them alone and be badly beaten until veterans from a fraternity showed up to stand with him. The SDS did not come that day or any day. The flag remained flying.

As the war dragged on, Musgrave became increasingly concerned. He had long been angered at the mandate to use the M-16 rifle when the M-14 was far more reliable. The enemy had superior weapons which he called "a hell of a note" and said the VA and Viet Cong would remove the boots from dead Americans but leave the M-16 lying on the ground.

The last straw for Musgrave was when political and military leaders suggested the war was unwinnable but planned to send 200,000 more young American soldiers to an "unwinnable war" in Vietnam. Musgrave had enough. He joined Vietnam Veterans against the war (VVAW) and took a lot of flak for doing so. Even his father advised against his joining. He received anonymous letters of accusing him of being a coward or a communist.

He quickly rose in the ranks, becoming one of the group's most effective speakers. He was one of the soldiers who threw away his medals at VVAW's long Washington, D.C. protest — "It was the hardest thing I've ever done" — to prove that he was indeed a combat veteran.

His goal in joining VVAW was to save the lives of young American soldiers and innocent Vietnamese civilians, something he thought the VVAW could do. But he says that almost three years into the organization he was giving a speech about VVAW and realized he was speaking about an organization that no longer existed. He said it no longer reflected his values and some of the leaders had become opportunistic.

Leaving the organization was as emotionally draining as was joining it. He said a lot of his friends were combat veterans like he was and they joined for the same reason he did: to save lives. This time the anonymous letters he received accused him of being an anti-communist. "As if that's a bad thing," he jokes.

He has spent the greater part of his life trying to help veterans ... especially those who are suicidal. "I haven't been able to save them all," he says, "but I have helped save some."

The Vietnam War changed John Musgrave's life just as World War II changed Bob Dole's life. Each has spent their life working in their own way to help veterans.

John Musgrave interacted with Senator Bob Dole on several occasions in his role as a member of VVAW simply because both men were from Kansas. Musgrave thought Dole did not like him because he did not like the VVAW. But when Musgrave co-chaired the effort to raise money to erect the first Vietnam War Memorial on any college campus at The University of Kansas where Dole had once played on the freshman football team, Dole came

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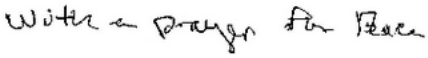
to the campus and said he wanted to present his check to John Musgrave who said he was both surprised and honored to accept the check. Apparently, Dole was aware of how much Musgrave had been doing to help veterans.

Though he uses crutches, Musgrave tries to accept every speaking engagement he is offered. Several years ago, he returned to Vietnam with his wife. He was disappointed that he did not recognize Con Thien where his life was forever changed. His recent return there with his two sons was to share that part of his life with them.

Musgrave is a poet who has written three books of poetry about the Vietnam War: *Notes to the Man Who Shot Me*; *On Snipers, Laughter and Death*; and *Under a Flare-Lit Sky*. He co-authored a book with Michael Clodfelter titled *The Vietnam Years: 1000 Questions and Answers*.

After The Vietnam War documentary in which he played a large part, Ken Burns called to tell him he had made a book deal for him with Alfred A. Knoff to publish his memoir: *The Education of Corporal John Musgrave.* In the forward to that book, Ken Burns and Lynn Novick write that John is "scrupulously honest. John cannot *not* tell the truth, whether it puts him in the best light or not. And sometimes, as he will be the first to tell you, it does not."

Until I met John, I had not been very interested in the Vietnam War, but I am now! I bought his book and asked him to autograph it. He ended the inscription as he ends his every message:



With a prayer for peace

John Musgrave at his home in Baldwin City, Kansas. (WSJ photo)

# Why John McEvoy resigned his position on the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Edie and John McEvoy with daughter Pat McEvoy Nuzum

***Patricia McEvoy Nuzum—***

*Editor's Note: It was serendipity that Pat Nuzum stopped by my home on her way to Topeka while visiting Kansas. At some point, I told her about the Vietnam veteran I was writing about and she mentioned that her father resigned his position on the Joint Chiefs of Staff because of his feelings about the Vietnam War. I asked her to write about it for Muzzleblasts. John McEvoy was respected by all. I remember someone once telling me that someone at a banquet talked about the "glory" of war and John quickly set him straight on that idea. I know you'll enjoy Pat's memories of her dad and what it was like to be an "Army brat."*

We unpacked boxes again. Our next assignment followed two years in Taiwan from 1958-60. We gave up powdered milk, boiled water, baths diluted with Clorox. Pedicabs, noisy streets, dusty lanes exchanged for green grass, paved roads and water from the tap. I go back many times to our Asian life, recalling experiences in a third world country that none of my friends at Edgewood Arsenal in 1960 could understand. The 60's began for me when we sailed back under the Golden Gate Bridge. Our departure on the USS

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Breckenridge from San Francisco had been the same troop carrier that brought dad and thousands others home from Europe at the end of the war. Now we were back home but the glow of the early sixties we enjoyed those next two years at Edgewood gave way to more serious times.

For my father, John McEvoy, a Brookline, MA native, the decade started with the hopes of a new administration under Kennedy. Years prior he had joined up and headed to Ft. Gordon before war was declared. He said the mood of the country was such that we all knew what was coming. When VE Day arrived the 83rd had been on five beach heads from North Africa to Sicily, up the boot to southern France, the Vosges, to Innsbruck. He understood the G.I.'s war.

Kennedy had fought in the Pacific and he had big aspirations for America. We felt the optimism and enthusiasm but those Camelot years ended in November 1963 and Kennedy's goals for a man on the moon, the Peace Corps, voting rights, and his policies for a more peaceful country and world eventually began to intersect with our involvement in another small Asian country, Vietnam.

In the summer of 1962 we were on the move again, unpacking boxes at our new home in Arlington, Virginia. Dad was a full colonel in the Chemical Corps assigned now to The Pentagon Joint Chiefs. Edgewood had the small town feel of an army post and Washington though a much quieter town at that time, was far from the freedom and convenience of Edgewood. We were a one car family; mom still shopped the commissary at Ft. Myer and often picked dad up at the entrance steps to the Pentagon on days she needed the car. Sometimes we rode along too; the drive home followed the Potomac River, passing sites like Memorial Bridge, Arlington Cemetery, Georgetown with few other cars sharing the road.

Dad invited me to the Pentagon. It was his workplace but it was fast becoming another landmark. Though I had finished ninth grade, everything was still new to me. I hadn't even realized John Glenn's daughter had been in my class until clued in by a classmate. We watched, after school one day, the media camped out on their front lawn. The politicians in Congress brought their families to live in the Washington area. I remember names like Wright and Carter. But Washington was like that. People in government and in the news just lead ordinary lives.

Having grown up on a few army posts, old barracks converted to a Post Exchange or dispensary was not unfamiliar. So the Pentagon was far beyond any office I had visited before. Lengthy corridors led to an open landscaped area in the middle of the building. So many uniforms in one place and with that came many salutes. The atmosphere was casual and friendly. We finished up at dad's office with one last stop. He thought I might like to see what he called "the tank"; a small conference room with a heavy long oval table and chairs used by the Joint Chiefs. Each place set with a pen or pencil and paper of choice. One pad in particular filled with doodles. So and so sat here and someone else there. In the back, a tiny space - an enlarged phone booth of sorts. A wide ledge held a number of phones. The only red one, I was told, was the hot line to the Kremlin. Was it? I didn't doubt it. I think back now on the top military minds of the time meeting in a small room. Dad was an excellent writer, even when his eyesight failed him, he would say, "I can still think." I imagine he was a valuable member of the support staff.

And, on that day, not the building, the people nor "the tank" impressed me half as much as just being there with my father.

The Pentagon, located next to Arlington Cemetery is connected to Ft. Myer and the soldiers of the Old Guard prepare and preside over the military funerals and other special events. We were often on post. My mother never stopped shopping at the commissary and our doctor visits were on the post as was the church, a gas station, the swimming pool and the NCO and Officers clubs, barracks for the men and some women. Taps sounded to the end the day. People stopped their cars, getting out to stand until the flag had been taken down for the day. It wasn't uncommon to see a caisson coming from or going to the cemetery. The stable was a busy place and often men were polishing boots, currying horses or in formation practicing on the parade field or on the street.

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Ft. Myer, at that time, was divided into North and South Myer. As the years of the 60's went by and our country became more involved in the war in Vietnam, the barracks and buildings of South Myer made way for the hundreds of needed graves. I watched throughout high school, as the number of graves grew. The small equipment machines were ever present and many times a funeral would be in progress, visible proof of the expanding war.

It was not unusual for my father to express his democratic principles. It would have unusual if he hadn't. Dad believed in what we all want, a peaceful nation, and peaceful world. He had fought with the men of the 83rd for the freedoms we all value. My mother used to say that the men of the 83rd were his real family. He looked forward to every reunion. Our summer planned around those dates. By 1965 he was concerned about our Vietnam involvement and its effect on the younger generation.

I graduated high school in 1966 and Dad resigned his position at the Joint Chiefs of Staff that summer. My mother said his next assignment would have been Vietnam. He was up for promotion to General. He resigned instead. He did not believe in the Vietnam War policy. His decision was not discussed as a family. It was not a decision he made lightly. He knew war. Those who have read **The Bastard Battalion** will understand his role in the 83rd. His decision was his own and was firm. We learned more from dad a few days after he signed resignation papers at the Pentagon.

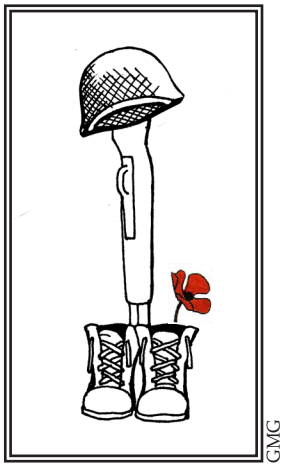
A young desk clerk, unaware of dad's WWII service, handed him his papers with the words, "What's the matter, sir, war over there getting too hot for you?" Dad said nothing. By coincidence, standing in the doorway behind the clerk stood an officer from the 83rd who had served with dad throughout the war and he overheard the comment. At home that afternoon, the phone rang. I happened to be in the kitchen when he picked it up. The clerk was calling to apologize for his comments having been prompted by his commanding officer. I was proud of my dad and of his friend from the 83rd; I witnessed opposing philosophies at that time, but united by their loyalty to country and their war experience.

Dad's views of the Vietnam war, as I began to realize in summer of 1966, ran parallel to those of my generation. A year later in 1967 my generation would be chanting "Hell no, we won't go..." In 1968 President Johnson would choose not to run again for office. By 1973 combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam. But in the summer of 1966, for me and for others, the reasons for the war that defined my generation were not as clearly defined as they had been for Dad years before.

Patricia (McEvoy) Nuzum
John and Edie's oldest

## Day is Done

**We Remember**




Sleep soldiers! Still in honored rest your truth and valor wearing. The bravest are the tenderest. The loving are the daring.
— Bayard Taylor

## We want your memories!

I am certain that you enjoyed reading about Pat's memories of her father and hope that many of you will follow suit.

Tell us any war stories he related or if he was reticent about his part in the war (many were and simply didn't want to talk about it), please tell us what your father did after the war. I have written that World War II soldiers came home to build families and businesses and communities.

My father didn't talk a lot about the war. Most of his combat experiences I learned about from the men with whom he served in the Rangers and the 83rd. Most of what we heard from Dad were the funny things that happened.

I wrote a newspaper humor column for 15 years and I often wrote about Dad including one column in which I related that while shaving, he sang Italian opera at the top of his lungs interspersed with his war songs. I said my sisters and I never learned Italian but we learned all of the war songs. In third grade, I sang one for show and tell. I took out the word I knew was bad, replacing crap with sleep, but in my childhood innocence left in a word that referred to the naughty body parts of a hairy baboon.

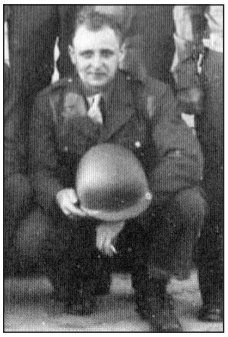
The 83rd CMB was known as the "Rangers' artillery." That was the reason Dad joined the 83rd when Darby's three Ranger battalions were decimated at Cisterns and then disbanded. At one of the reunions, John McEvoy sang one of the Ranger songs I had often heard Dad sing. He stopped before he got to the X-rated part and I didn't tell him I knew all of the words and verses.

Please send me stories about your fathers. You don't have to be a professional writer; that's what editors are for!

83rd CMB Veterans Association
c/o Marsha Henry Goff
1877 N 1000 Road
Lawrence, KS 66046-9225

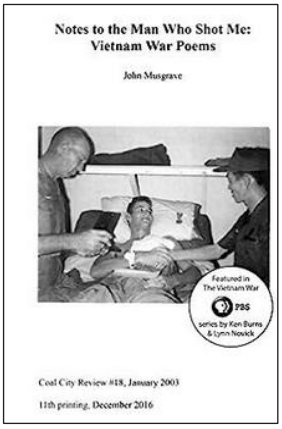
# Wartime and later photos of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, et al

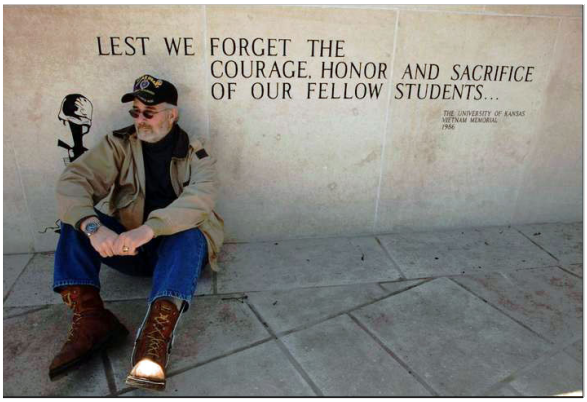
World War II Memorial Campanile
University of Kansas



Clair Strickler

Ed Trey and John McEvoy




Vietnam Memorial KU Campus (J-W Photo)