

## THE BUILDING OF THE WALL

Many historians agree that no other war in twentieth century American history has stirred up so much controversy or threatened to pull the country apart at its seams as that of the Vietnam War. With so many Americans unclear as to the reasons for United States military involvement in Vietnam, they had mixed reactions to those who served in the war. Instead of a hero's welcome like that received by veterans returning home from previous wars, most Vietnam veterans came home to find that many Americans were confused, angry and hostile.

The last United States ground troops withdrew from Vietnam on March 29, 1973. However, it took nearly 10 years before the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was completed in Washington, D.C. It bears the names of more than 58,000 Americans who died during the Vietnam War or who are still listed as Missing in Action or Prisoners of War.

In 1979 the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc., was established. Through private contributions, this organization raised over \$7 million. Maya Yin Lin, a 21-year-old architectural student from Yale University, won a national competition for the design of the memorial.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, known more commonly as the Wall, actually consists of two walls that meet at an angle. Each of the two walls measures 245 feet long. The two walls are built from 140 black granite panels with the names of the veterans neatly chiseled into the surface. There is a walkway in front of the Wall for visitors to view the memorial. Directories are available to assist in locating the names of specific veterans. In 1984 a bronze sculpture of three servicemen was added to the memorial. Another sculpture of three servicewomen was completed in 1993, with its dedication held in November of that year. The

Vietnam Women's Memorial Project was begun in 1984 and is the first memorial in Washington, D.C. honoring women's military service.