

WOMEN TO BE HONORED BY VIETNAM WAR MEMORIAL

By **MARGIE PETERSON, The Morning Call**

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Bob Stocker is convinced that if the Army nurse who treated him when he was shot in the spine in Vietnam in 1968 were to walk into a room today he would know her instantly.

"I can't remember what she looked like," said Stocker, a Vietnam veteran from Phillipsburg. "But I remember what she smelled like."

He has carried the memory of that nurse's perfume with him as kind of an intangible monument to the kindness she showed him. The Vietnam Women's Memorial Project Inc. has developed a more tangible memorial to the women who served.

During the 12-year Vietnam War, an estimated 265,000 women served voluntarily as nurses, doctors, Red Cross workers and USO entertainers, and support staff in all branches of the service, according to the memorial project foundation.

Allentown nurse Nancy Eckert who served in the 93rd Evacuation Hospital, 20 miles north of Saigon, is trying to find other women in the area who served and make sure they sign up for the memorial's "Sister Search" registry.

Those who register will be invited to the dedication of the memorial, a bronze statue of three women in fatigues, one holding a wounded soldier. It will be dedicated in Washington, D.C., Nov. 11.

Eckert expects the ceremony and accompanying activities to be a great opportunity for reunions.

The registry, which list former units and current addresses, will help reunite those who served.

However, project directors will not give out addresses, but will forward inquiries, Eckert said. Of the 265,000 women who served only about 10,000 have sent in their names and addresses for the registry so far, she said.

The memorial will be near the Vietnam Wall and its accompanying sculpture of three infantry soldiers.

"The women's memorial is long overdue," said Stocker. "I don't think I could have made it without (the nurses)," especially the one with the perfume who comforted and encouraged him.

The men who served have been among the strongest supporters of the project, said Eckert who works at Lehigh Valley Hospital in the neuroscience department. Both she and Stocker are members of Vietnam Veterans of America, Lehigh Valley Chapter 415.

"The men who were injured have felt that there was no place to go to thank (those nurses) who cared for them," Eckert said.

For years she kept in touch with some of the nurses she served with but has lost track of all but two of them.

The committee still has to raise \$1.5 million to place the sculpture, landscape it, maintain it and pay for its dedication, Eckert said.

Footage of Eckert as a nurse during the war appears in a award-winning documentary about women in Vietnam called "Not On The Frontline," produced by University of Nebraska-Lincoln Television/Nebraska ETV Network.

"We actually were frontline," said Eckert. In other wars, there was relative safety behind the lines. But in Vietnam there were no boundaries and the front was everywhere.

The Vietnam Women's memorial is separate from the proposed Women In Military Service for America Memorial, which is to be for the 1.8 million women who served in all branches of the service in war and peacetime. That memorial is to be built into the curved granite wall that is currently the entrance to Arlington Cemetery. It's expected to cost about \$14 million; so far the foundation raising the money has \$1 million in the bank and has several fund-raising efforts in the works.

For more information on the Vietnam Women's Memorial or to apply for the "Sister Search" registry, write to Vietnam Women's Memorial Project, 2001 S St., N.W., Suite 302, Washington, D.C.

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