



Something Remarkable

BY WILLIAM C. TRIPLETT

Every April 30 something remarkable happens on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Newport, Oregon. Starting around 4 p.m., roughly the time the South Vietnamese government officially ceased to exist on that day in 1975, the point of a long shadow cast by an obelisk reaches a nearby stone on which the following lines by author Tom Crawford have been etched:

*Light is an appointment we
must all keep when we are
quiet and can find the way.*

This is how the Lincoln County Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk Memorial every year marks the end of the war that claimed the lives of more than 58,000 Americans. More than two dozen of them were from Lincoln County, including one of the few sets of brothers killed in Vietnam.

Those who have watched the long shadow touch the stone say the experience is “deeply moving,” Tony Molina said. A member of VVA’s Chapter 411 in Newport, Molina has witnessed the moment on five occasions over the years.

It’s fair to say that had it not been for Molina, there would be no moment to witness. In the 1980s, when no memorial to the war existed in Newport, Molina began to meet parents who had lost sons in Vietnam. Parents who were still—and in some way always will be—grieving.

Molina wanted to make sure no one from surrounding Lincoln County who had served and died in Vietnam would be forgotten. He petitioned the Newport City Council, which was open to the idea of building a memorial but offered no money for it.

Molina persisted, and the council eventually agreed to provide \$50,000 if Molina would agree to raise the same amount on his

own. He accepted the offer, and then raised the cash. The council kicked in its half.

A design contest was held locally. The winning submission envisioned a set of walkways lined with stones and boulders, as well as benches dedicated to the Lincoln County servicemen who were killed. The walkways would converge at a circular area on the bluffs eighty feet above the beach, overlooking the ocean.

A conical spire, etched with herons flying upward to symbolize ascending spirits, was added to the design as the centerpiece of the circle. The spire would also serve as a sundial. Stones were placed around the edges of the circle, with the stone bearing the Crawford poem carefully situated so that the spire’s shadow would touch it between 4:00-4:30 p.m. every April 30.

It took about two years for construction, Molina said, “and it took a lot of work to make it happen. We had to get volunteers to go with us to find and haul boulders for the project from thirty miles away.”

Molina also did the research to identify Lincoln County residents who had died in Vietnam. High school yearbooks proved valuable, but after word got out about what he was doing, people started contacting him. “A woman who lives about three hours away got in touch and wanted to make sure her two sons’ names were included,” he said.

One had been in the Army, the other in the Marine Corps. Both once called Lincoln County home.

The memorial has been a popular, if somber, attraction for both residents and visitors. Sadly, a couple Molina met early on, now in their nineties, still haven’t come to see their son’s name inscribed with twenty-five others on one of the large boulders. “It’s still too painful for them,” Molina said.

For some, wars never end even when they do. ■