Oregon State Capitol FOUNDATION

Newsletter

Fall 2021

Veterans, we salute you!

Honoring Oregon veterans who dutifully served, preserving the freedom of debate and open discussion within the walls of our Capitol.

By Gary Wilhelms, OSCF Board Member

It is important to remember and preserve our history. As Veterans Day approaches, we remember and honor those who served, their sacrifices and those of their families.

Your past support has enabled the Oregon State Capitol Foundation to erect two memorials on the Capitol grounds. The Claire Phillips Memorial and the Oregon Veterans Medal of Honor Memorial honor remarkable Oregonians who fought valiantly to keep America free and secure.

On the 70th anniversary of D-Day in 2014, the Oregon WWII Memorial Foundation unveiled the Oregon World War II Memorial in Willson Park. This stately monument and its surroundings are dedicated to all Oregonians who faithfully served both here at home and overseas during World War II.

With the passage of Senate Bill 319 in 2021, our Legislature set aside a portion of the State Capitol State Park for a Vietnam War memorial.

Once constructed, this new memorial – a project of the Vietnam War Memorial Fund organization – will honor the service and sacrifice of all who served in the tumultuous years of the Vietnam War.

Based on data from the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, we are now losing up to eight Vietnam veterans each day making this project not only timely but urgent.

> ***I congratulate the Oregon Legislature for passing a bill to construct a Vietnam Memorial for all the Oregonians who served when called and were never recognized and appreciated for their service.***
>
> *— Gene Whisnant, U.S. Air Force Colonel, retired, and former Oregon State Representative.*

Senate Bill 319 indicates that about 100,000 Oregonians who served their country in military duty during the Vietnam era are alive today. This includes former legislators Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, Sen. Dick Springer, Rep. Sal Esquivel and Rep. Gene Whisnant. We are grateful to them for sharing recollections of their service with us on the pages that follow.

Oregon State Capitol FOUNDATION

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Veterans, we salute you!
Continued from front cover

Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson

"In 1968 I decided to travel the world and the only way I could do that was join the airlines as a stewardess (that's what we called ourselves back then). I was based in LA and was asked to volunteer flying in and out of Vietnam, transporting our GIs to their R&R to Honolulu or Tokyo. The government made us 2nd lieutenants in the Air Force and gave us dog tags. I remember my first trip flying into Saigon and seeing the bomb craters on the landscape. That was a reality check for me.

There were three of us besides the pilots and we decided to dress up in our short dresses for the GIs. We knew it was a mistake when the GIs boarded. Their faces were blank, eyes unseeing, serious, and no bravado. This was combat they were leaving and the experiences they had endured we couldn't even relate to.

This was war and that experience is why as a Senator on the Veterans Committee, I wanted to help our military veterans."

Sen. Dick Springer

"I was 2nd Lieutenant in the Navy. After completing NROTC training at Princeton in 1970, I spent nearly a year as a gunnery officer on the aircraft carrier Coral Sea on the Tonkin Gulf, near active battle sites in Vietnam. Our ship often teemed with planes landing and leaving with wounded young GIs, many away from home for the first time in their lives."

Rep. Sal Esquivel

"I was in Vietnam from August 1969 to August 1970, one week short of a year. I was an Aviation Storekeeper 3rd class in the Navy. We were the liaison between COMFAIR WESTPAC at Sugi, Japan and all Marine and Naval aviation units in Vietnam.

During my 15 years in the Oregon Legislature, it was my honor to serve many sessions on the Veterans and Emergency Services Committee."

"We were the best America had."
— Unknown

Cover: Evan Sorce, Chief of Staff for Rep. Paul Evans, reads about the Jewish soldiers who wore uniforms displayed by the VFW #661 Traveling Uniform Museum. The display accompanied the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education exhibit, "The Second World War — An Oregon Perspective," sponsored by the Foundation in 2019. *Photo: Joel Zak.*

Rep. Gene Whisnant

"I served at DaNang AFB, Vietnam called 'Rocket City' from June 1968 to June 1969. I was a First Lieutenant, 24 years old, commanding a detachment of 60. Daily, we loaded cameras on the F-4 aircraft. After the missions, we downloaded and processed the film. Our combat cameramen with still photograph and film documented Air Force activities on bases, at forward operating locations, and as aircraft crew members.

Daily, I briefed the Wing Commander and his staff on the F-4 mission results from our film. I flew on 31 combat missions including one into North Vietnam and earned an Air Medal. Our combat camera unit did not suffer any combat losses or injuries. There were combat cameramen killed during the Vietnam war including some on the last 'baby lift' mission on April 1975 out of Vietnam which crashed evacuating friendly Vietnamese and their families.

I am proud of my service and that of many men and women who answered the call to arms by our political leaders and I am sad we lost so many good people."

The legacy I choose to leave

Working as a lobbyist in the Oregon State Capitol, Nan Heim grew to love the beautiful building and the history it represents. When asked to serve on the Oregon State Capitol Foundation Board in 2018, Nan enthusiastically agreed. Even so, when it came to becoming a legacy donor, she hesitated.

"I thought about making a legacy contribution," Nan says. *"But I thought it would be so complicated."*

Nan eventually called her financial consultant. After he explained her options, she chose to donate a set percentage of an account as a legacy to the Foundation.

"The entire process, including signing, took under an hour," she says. *"I love knowing that I'm making a lasting contribution towards preserving our Capitol."*

Nan would be happy to talk with you about making a legacy contribution. Contact her at nanheim@nanheim.com.

Nan Heim
OSCF Vice Chair

Please join us in celebrating the lives of Oregonians who added to the Capitol story

Rep. Harvey Akeson, who served in the 1969-1975 Legislative Sessions, died Sept. 29 at age 83.

Rep. Don Butsch, who served in the 1987 Legislative Session, died Aug. 26 at age 96.

Sen. Gary George, who served in the 1997-2008 Legislative Sessions, died June 19 at age 77.

Rep. Gary Leif was appointed to the House in 2018, where he served until he died July 23 at age 64.

Lawanda Manning, wife and legislative assistant to Sen. James Manning, died June 11 at age 66.

Jane Netboy, a longtime senior care advocate at the Capitol, died Aug. 11 at age 81.

Nola Parkinson, wife and administrative assistant to Rep. Fred Parkinson, died May 31 at age 89.

Sen. Bob Shoemaker, Jr., who served during the 1989-1993 Legislative Sessions, died Sept. 12 at age 89.

Kathy Starr, who worked as a Legislative Assistant for former Sen. Bruce Starr, died July 28 at age 83.

Mary Swigart Wilkerson, former Oregon Legislative Counsel staff, died May 27 at age 89.

Do you remember that feeling of awestruck wonder you had when you first visited your Capitol? Immerse yourself in the exceptional beauty and Oregon history that surrounds you there today to experience that excitement again!

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Pictured:
Gene Whisnant, circa 1969.

Whisnant, a retired U.S. Air Force Colonel and former Oregon State Representative, shares memories about his military service in this special Foundation newsletter honoring Oregon veterans.

Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, Sen. Dick Springer, Rep. Sal Esquivel and Rep. Gene Whisnant have a shared history besides formerly serving in the Oregon State Legislature. What is it?

Look inside!