

# Visit “The Wall” (6)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Memorial Day, Uncategorized May 26, 2019

*(6th in a series of posts on Memorial Day)*

The Vietnam War was Gadfly’s war.

It seems like we are always at war.

Everybody has a “my war.”

I had a number. But I was “old.” “They” said I was unlikely to be drafted. I wasn’t.

But I have always felt a weird kind of guilt.

Maybe that’s why I spent several years on [The Vietnam Wall Controversy](#) project, which I described thusly:

How should we remember a war that we “lost”? You may have been tear-choked as you touched or watched others touch “the Wall” at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the most visited war memorial in our nation’s capital. Yet, this seemingly god-given shrine wears political feet of clay, and behind it lies a fierce controversy that re-opened the wounds of the war the memorial was designed to heal. Experience the evolution of the Vietnam Wall controversy by reading through a chronological list of documents divided into five rounds.

I wanted to provide the primary sources that would enable students to understand why the desire to memorialize the 58,000 Vietnam war dead was fraught with such controversy.

They were born after the Wall was completed. They missed the fun. They missed an education on the kind of war that can be fought over the bodies of those who died in war.

The controversy over the Vietnam Memorial (“The Wall”) was not a pretty one.

But first I had to get these students “involved.” They knew next to nothing about the Vietnam War. Politics insured that it was virtually unstudied in high school.

As a warm-up exercise, I tried to get them to personalize the names on the Wall. To make a connection.

I would send them to a virtual Wall website such as [The Wall-USA](#).

And ask them to make a connection with a family member, if any, killed in the war.

And ask them to make a connection, albeit an artificial one, with one or more of the dead by searching by their name (anybody with your name killed in the war?), their last name, anybody born on their birthday, anybody killed on their birthday (or another important day), anybody from their hometown, someone on a certain panel of the Wall (their lucky number, for instance), someone killed early in the war, someone killed late — especially at the very end, etc. and etc.

Then look at whatever other info is there: for instance, how long were they in Vietnam before killed?

Then look at the personal comments left by visitors, if any. Which can be wrenching. And marked by longevity.

And, finally, then leave a comment. (That function is now disabled on this site, unfortunately.) Perhaps a word of thanks. A salute.

Dana is remembering Jack Edward Derrico, killed 3 weeks and 1 day into his tour at age 20.

Age 20.

Gadfly invites you visit [the Wall](#) this Memorial weekend.

And find someone to remember.