

Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation

Essay Contest with Travel Prize

Telling a Story of the Vietnam War Through the Voice of One Heroic Woman

Introduction and Background

The Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation estimates that some 265,000 women volunteered to serve in the U.S. Military during the Vietnam Era and that approximately 11,000 military women served "in country" during the conflict. While about 90 percent of these served as nurses, they also served in Vietnam as physicians, air traffic controllers, intelligence officers, clerks and other specialties in the various branches of the U.S. military. Additionally, an unknown number of women served in civilian capacities in Vietnam in the Red Cross, the USO, and many civic organizations, in addition women served as correspondents for various news organizations.

Seven female Army nurses and one female Air Force Nurse paid the ultimate sacrifice during the course of their service in Vietnam. Included among these was Lieutenant Colonel Annie Ruth Graham, who died of a subarachnoid hemorrhage while serving at a hospital in Tuy Hoa in 1968 and whose service career spanned WW II and Korea prior to Vietnam. Another casualty the following year was First Lieutenant Sharon Ann Lane, who died of a shrapnel wound received June 8, 1969 while serving at the 312th Evacuation Hospital at Chu Lai. In recognition of her service Lt. Lane was awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star with "V" device, the national Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the National Order of Vietnam Medal, and the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross, with Palm. In all, the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation has identified 67 total female deaths stemming from the conflict: 59 civilian and 8 military.

20th Anniversary Essay Contest

The Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation (VWMF) Essay Contest invites students enrolled in United States high schools to write an essay about the role of women serving during the Vietnam Era. Because women were not subject to the draft, their involvement with the Vietnam conflict was strictly voluntary, as it is today. During the era of the Vietnam War, newspapers regularly printed job listings separately by gender and women earned about 60 cents for every dollar earned by a male counterpart. This was an interesting time to be a woman who volunteered to serve in a war.

An essay in this contest hosted by the VWMF must address a particular woman who served during the Vietnam era (1964-1975). The essay must be based on a personal interview that links the essay writer with his/her subject. The author of the essay is not required to have a personal relationship with the subject of the research. It may be a grandmother or great-aunt who served as a military nurse or Red Cross Worker. But, it also may be a neighbor or someone the interviewer connects with through the local Veteran Service Organizations (e.g. the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion). Each subject of

an essay should be a woman who exhibited the values of patriotic service, perseverance, compassion and commitment to duty exemplified by the 67 women who paid the ultimate sacrifice and their 265,000 sisters who engaged in active service to their country during the Vietnam Era. The essay must not stop with mere recitation of the selected woman's life but must additionally reflect on the meaning of that life as a model for social influence and furthering the progress of American ideals. The essay may detail the relationship the writer has to the subject, but it is not necessary.

Essay Contest Prize Information

The winner of the competitive essay contest will be awarded the following:

- Round trip coach airline tickets for the student, a teacher, and a parent/guardian to Washington D.C. for the 20th Anniversary of the Vietnam Women's Memorial in November 2013. Travel arrangements will be coordinated through the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation.
- Two rooms at the Embassy Suites Hotel on 22nd Street, NW (The VWMF headquarters hotel) in Washington D.C. for two nights during the weekend of November 9 -11, 2013.
- A \$250 stipend for the essay winner.
- The essay winner will be invited to read his/her essay at the 20th Anniversary "Storytelling at the Vietnam Women's Memorial: In Their Own Words" on November 11, 2013. This reading will be video recorded for possible future publication.
- Portions of the winning essay will be published in the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation Newsletter and the entire essay will appear on the VWMF web site.

Essay Requirements and Judging Criteria

- The essay must be no longer than 1000 words.
- The essay must be the original work of the submitting author and must contain MLA style footnoted attribution for any non-original material. It is understood that the submitting author may need to perform research; however, citing from Wikipedia or other websites lacking scholarly institutional affiliation and peer review should be strictly avoided.
- The essay must not only present the facts identifying the individual and describing her characteristics but must also provide the analysis and argument for how the facts demonstrate social influence and furtherance of American ideals.
- Essays must result from interviews or first-hand discussion with the subject.
- The essay must demonstrate strong writing skills, especially in –
 - Organization, exhibiting interesting introduction and consistent thematic flow throughout;

- Grammar, exhibiting highly accurate and effective syntax, word usage, punctuation and spelling conventions;
 - Strong Word Choice, exhibiting precise but engaging language; and
 - Sentence Fluency, exhibiting varied and crafted clause and sentence structures.
- Essays must be typed.

Deadline for Submission and Judging

All essays must be received by **September 10, 2013**. Essays should be submitted by mail to:

Dr. Marsha Guenzler-Stevens
Vice President of the Board – Vietnam Women’s Memorial Foundation
3100 Stamp Student Union
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland 20742

On a separate sheet of paper from the essay, please include the name of the student, home address, telephone number, email address, and name of school and grade in school. This information should not appear on the essay.

Essays will be reviewed and judged by members of the Vietnam Women’s Memorial Foundation Board and the winning essay will be announced on October 1, 2013. Travel arrangements for the author of the winning essay and his/her teacher will be made at that time for the November 11, 2013 Veterans Day celebration in Washington D.C. The VWMF retains the first North American publishing rights to this essay. The essay author and his/her teacher may be invited to participate in interviews with members of the media at events in conjunction with the 20th Anniversary of the Vietnam Women’s Memorial.