

## **KSVAC Call to Action**

June 18, 2009

To: All veterans, veterans' families, active duty military and their families and those citizens who owe their freedoms to the faithful loyalty and diligence of the U.S. military.

Subject: The Proposed New South Vietnamese Soldiers Vietnam Memorial

KSVAC Mission:

- To reserve Wichita Veterans Memorial Park for memorials which honor the U.S. Service men and women.
- To honor and protect the ground made sacred by the memorials to the sacrifices of the men and women in service to the United States of America presently located in Veterans Memorial Park.
- To introduce a proposal to Wichita City Council proclaiming that Wichita Veterans Memorial Park is and shall remain dedicated to the memory of U.S. Military Forces and to no others.

Since our inception as a nation, the American military have fought to win and preserve our freedoms as Americans, freedoms that we now take for granted. As a people we owe an immense debt of gratitude to those who, throughout our history, have been willing to fight, sacrifice and die for those freedoms. The memorials in Veterans Memorial Park that publicly recognize those sacrifices are not nearly enough to repay that debt.

However, we, as a people, owe no debt of gratitude to the South Vietnamese Army. And while, philosophically, we can appreciate and respect what they did for their own country; they did not fight for our freedoms, our country, or our way of life.

When a people forgets the sacrifices of those who stand between them and tyranny, as many have so obviously done, they cease to understand why the service of those who made those sacrifices is sacred and worthy of the highest public respect.

Unfortunately, many inaccurate and misleading statements have been made against veterans regarding this issue. Our position on this issue has nothing to do with bias against the Vietnamese community; our position is only that the honor and commitment that we feel as United States Veterans compels us to take a stance to

protect and honor the remembrance of our fallen from all wars who have given their lives for our country.

City Councilwoman Janet Miller has published in the Wichita Eagle that the Korean War Memorial in Veterans Memorial Park already pays homage to foreign troops. This statement is false and intentionally misleading. The memorial honors only American "heroes".

It has also been incorrectly stated that the Merchant Marines were not veterans and that having a memorial in the park to them justifies having a memorial to foreign national soldiers. The Merchant Marines who served in WWII are Veterans.

*The merchant marine is a civilian auxiliary of the U.S. Navy, but not a uniformed service, except in times of war when, in accordance with the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, mariners are considered military personnel. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill into law making veterans of merchant mariners who serve in war. (cite)*

Not a single federally sanctioned veteran's organization was consulted or even notified regarding the proposed monument. Neither the City nor the Vietnamese community has asked the official representatives nor the rank and file of veterans or active duty service men and women for their input. It is of deep concern to us that the veterans and those who represent them are apparently invisible to those who are making decisions that affect us.

#### FACTS:

- The John Steven's Veterans Memorial Park was conceived as a park to honor American Veterans. The Wichita Eagle of November 12, 1977 reported the dedication as follows, "Today's dedication of John S. Stevens Veterans Memorial Park at 2nd and Greenway again gives Wichita a public facility honoring those who have served in this country's wars...Now a riverfront plaza will serve as a reminder of Wichitan's efforts and sacrifices in their country's military service..."
- The only memorials that exist in the Park now are to men and women who served in the United States military.
- The Park has limited space. The Park itself is only 3.5 acres with no room for expansion. Only a few of the wars and conflicts in which American

soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen have fought and died are memorialized in the Park. Many conflicts in which American military served are not yet memorialized, including, WWI, WWII, Afghanistan, First Gulf War, Iraq, Grenada, Bosnia and Panama. Memorials to the Veterans of the United States have first priority.

- There is already a Vietnam Memorial in the park. When other veterans have not yet been honored, in view of the limited space, it is inappropriate to have two major structures commemorating the same conflict.
- The proposed memorial has wording that honors the South Vietnamese Military and other Allies.
- People of all races, religions, colors, gender and national origin serve in the United States military. Veterans are as diverse and integrated as the active duty military. There is no prejudice as to race, color or religion involved in asking that only American veterans be memorialized in a Veteran's Memorial Park in Wichita, Kansas.
- The John Stevens Veterans Memorial Park was conceived as a park to honor Veterans of the United States Armed Forces. The Wichita Eagle of November 12, 1977 reported the dedication as follows:

“Today's dedication of John S. Stevens Veterans Memorial Park at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Greenway again gives Wichita a public facility honoring those who have served in this country's wars...Now a riverfront plaza will serve as a reminder of Wichitan's efforts and sacrifices in their country's military service...”

- The City of Wichita announces to the public in the Wichita phone directory that "the Park is a tribute to those Kansas citizens who gave their lives in battle for their country." (2008 At&T Community Living Pages) and on the Attractions in Wichita, Kansas Website proclaims "that the Veterans Memorial Park is a tribute to the men and women of Kansas who answered the Nation's call to defend our freedom in the U.S. Armed Forces and the Merchant Marines."
- American service men and women take a lifetime oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States. No foreign national serving a foreign government takes that oath; America is not protected by foreign soldiers.

- The South Vietnamese were not our allies; we were theirs. They did not fight for our freedom; we fought and died for theirs.
- A large ceremonial urn is the planned central feature of the South Vietnamese Soldier's Memorial. There are no fixed religious symbols on any other memorial in the park. This absence of religious symbols is intentional in order to maintain the park as non-partisan and non-sectarian out of respect for the multitudes of religious beliefs held by our service men and women. The Vietnamese community plans to congregate for large ceremonies in Veterans Memorial Park that will include the burning of incense as part of the ceremony.

In spite of the fact that the Vietnamese community is aware that many veterans feel a profound sense of disrespect in the insistence that soldiers of a foreign government should be honored equally with American Veterans in our Veterans Memorial Park, the South Vietnamese have not withdrawn their demand. They have shown that their profession of respect for the Americans soldiers is not genuine, but merely necessary words to get the memorial to South Vietnamese soldiers into the park.

The right to be memorialized in the Veteran's Memorial Park is earned by honorable service in the United States Military, and by nothing else. The diminishment of the respect and honor shown for the service of our American soldiers and sailors is not a bone to throw to diversity and that ground sacred to a people's defending warriors is an inappropriate place to promote the personal vision of City Councilwoman Janet Miller that "a multi-national memorial is an idea whose time has come."

In conclusion: We support the proposition that the Veterans Memorial Park is sacred ground dedicated to the memory of American service men and women who served our county in the American uniform and who each took the enlistment oath "to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic;" and to ... "bear true faith and allegiance to the same." These American service men and women faithfully served the United States of America and her interests and, in some cases, offered up their lives to fulfill this oath. Their dedication to their oath sets the American soldier, sailor, marine, airman and Coast Guard above all other foreign national combatants, and entitles their service to be recognized, honored and memorialized, separate and independent from the service of foreign nationals who fought while wearing the uniform of a foreign country.

All veterans, we call on you to serve your country and fellow veterans again. You have a voice as a citizen. Make your opinions known.

Contact your mayor and city council men and women by email, phone, mail or in person.

Attend the Veteran Recognition Ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park on June 28, 2009 at 10:00 am.

Sign the Petition for Reserving Veterans Memorial Park for Veterans who were serving in the US Armed forces at the time of their service

Attend the City Council Meeting on July 14, 2009 at 9:00 when this issue will be voted on.

KSVAC - John Wilson, Dennis Scuffham, Terry Houck, Linda Kirby, Phillip Blake, Douglas Brady and Bryson Allen

## PREAMBLE

Since our inception as a nation, the American Armed Forces has fought to win and preserve the freedoms we hold dear. As a people, we owe an immense debt of gratitude to those who, throughout our history, have been willing to fight, sacrifice and die for those freedoms. The memorials in Veterans Memorial Park are public recognition of those sacrifices.

## PROCLAMATION

The City Council of the City of Wichita, Kansas hereby proclaims that the Veterans Memorial Park located at 339 N. Greenway Blvd is, and shall remain, dedicated to the memory of those men and women who served in the Armed Forces of the United State of America and who each took the life long oath “to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic;” and to ...”bear true faith and allegiance to the same.” These American service men and women faithfully served the United States of America and her interests and, in some cases, offered up their lives to fulfill this oath. Their dedication to their oath to Constitution and to our County entitles the American Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen to be recognized, honored and memorialized, separate and independent from all others.

BY THE CITY OF WICHITA, KANSAS this \_\_\_\_ day of July 2009