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Record Group/Collection: George H.W. Bush Presidential Records
Collection/Office of Origin: Speechwriting, White House Office of
Series: Smith, Curt, Files
Subseries: Chron File, 1989-1992

OA/ID Number: 13888
Folder ID Number: 13888-042

Folder Title:
Texas Vietnam Veterans [Memorial], Dallas, Texas, 11/11/89

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
G	18	29	1	4

father whose son or daughter will know him as a hero, but never as a dad. Love for the young boy whose mom still caresses a tear-stained battle ribbon. And the teenage nurse -- her entire life before her -- maimed by a mindless, aimless, erratic shell.

They are the true Lone Star heroes of America's Longest War. And we must thank them, honor them. Thank them by giving Viet Nam vets hope and opportunity. And by linking them to the heroes of the Alamo. Where ^{girls,} martyrs defied superior forces. Or San Jacinto, Sam Houston's ode to bravery and daring. Most of all, we can thank them by teaching future generations what this memorial teaches us. About selflessness. And sacrifice. About how America would not be the land of the free if it were not also the ^{we} land of the brave.

Last year, 40 per cent of the visitors to America's Viet Nam memorials were boys and girls age 12 or younger. They don't remember the conflict in Southeast Asia. But they miss their uncle, their aunt, their brother, their dad. And when they say, "What was ~~the war~~ all about? What does it mean?" we owe them an answer. For what their loved ones died for, we must live for. And keep alive the lessons which inspired these Lone Star heroes of Viet Nam.

We must tell ^{we} them that to defend democracy is always a valiant cause. From the fields of Flanders to the rugged cliffs of Normandy. Whether scaling Korea's uplands. Or trudging -- alone and valiant -- through the rice paddies of Mekong.

And tell them, too, that to acclaim a love of liberty -- the liberty which outlasts oppression -- this, also, is a valiant cause. For liberty can ensure for individuals, choice; for society, pluralism; and for Nations, self-determination.

We must tell them that America went to Viet Nam not to serve itself -- but those who asked only the chance to chart their destiny. And of the valor of Americans who gave of themselves, and often of their lives. Fighting bravely, in an unknown land, so that freedom might prevail.

Finally, we must say to these kids: This is your memorial. For we want you to know about the wonderful people whose names illuminate these tablets. They were brave. They loved their country. They respected one another. They would want you to have the future they were deprived of. A future devoid of war and fear. And that their sacrifice made possible.

Lincoln called such sacrifice "that last full measure of devotion." And we must never forget it. For if the Texans we honor today could speak, they might say, "Praise us as you will -- but above, we want to be remembered."

Today, we remember the Lone Star heroes of America's Longest War. And through them, heroes from every war throughout our history where America's uniformed sons and daughters took up arms, and bore our burden, for a cause larger than themselves.

The nearly 3.3 million Americans who served in Viet Nam -- more than 450,000 of them Texans. And the Viet Nam veterans alive today -- 175,000 in Texas -- we remember them. Men like

___'s Sam Johnson, a prisoner for 7 years in what they called the Hanoi Hilton. Tortured. Arms crippled. Now a State legislator. And Ron Cowart: He returned from Nam to become a Dallas cop. And found Cambodians to be leery of the police. So he opened a storefront police station in a poor Asian neighborhood. He terms it "Officer Friendly"; it's helped Asians and non-Asians to mingle, and crime to plummet.

Then, there are America's ___ wounded from the Viet Nam conflict -- 17,250 from the State of Bowie and Travis and Davy Crockett -- and today, we remember them.

Our more than 2,500 missing or unaccounted for -- 162 from the Lone Star State -- we remember them. For while missing in action -- and from our lives -- MIAs are not missing from our thoughts -- nor from our hearts. And so the POW-MIA flag now flies at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and POW-MIA Recognition Day. // And we will not rest until every veteran unaccounted for is accounted for. // While prisoners of war are in inevitable result of armed conflict, we must never allow our veterans to become prisoners of neglect. //

Finally, 58,022 Americans gave their lives in Viet Nam. And fully 3,243 -- the third largest number of any State -- came from almost 600 Texas cities and small towns. And we remember them. Men like Ruben Jose Carbajal of El Paso, only 21 when he was killed by a fragmentation device. And Robert Larry Oakes from Lamesa -- only 20, killed by rifle fire. Both died exactly 20