

# THEN *and* NOW!

## Veterans Day Marks Vietnam Veterans Memorial 20th Year

(NAPSA)—They served during war and protest, and then returned home to a divided America. On Veterans Day, November 11, 2002, America's Vietnam veterans will look to the National Mall in Washington, DC, to mark the 20th anniversary of the black granite wall that brought a nation back together—the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The names of more than 58,000 war dead are etched into the somber memorial that is now Washington's most visited site.

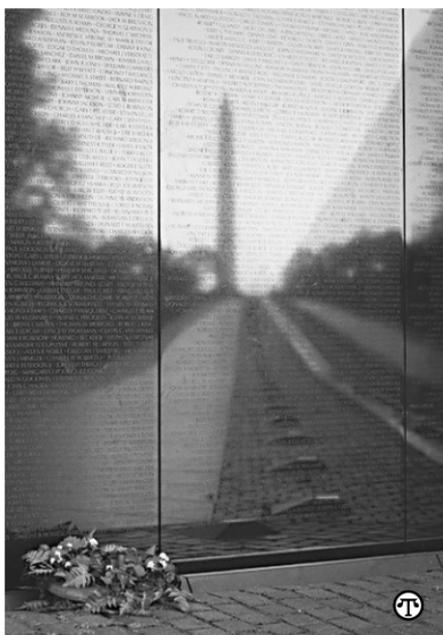
Those who survived the nation's longest war are now the largest group of America's wartime veterans. Their median age is 56.

During the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's 20 years, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has worked to reach out to Vietnam veterans with special programs and services to meet their changing needs.

In 1978, VA started the Agent Orange Registry for veterans concerned about possible health consequences of exposure to herbicides in Vietnam. In 1979, VA established its Vet Center program that has grown into a national system of 206 community-based counseling centers specializing in assisting Vietnam and other war veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder.

More than 300,000 veterans have joined the Agent Orange Registry and more continue to join as research indicates new illnesses linked to Agent Orange exposure. Joining the Registry entitles a veteran to a VA Agent Orange health assessment that establishes a record of medical history and current health and puts the veteran on the mailing list for research and benefits updates.

In 1991, that research led Congress to authorize VA to presume that certain specific illnesses are the result of Agent Orange exposure and grant compensation to veterans on the basis of their ser-



vice in Vietnam. Those illnesses now include chloracne, prophyria cutanea tarda, peripheral neuropathy, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, soft tissue sarcoma, Hodgkin's disease, multiple myeloma, prostate cancer, respiratory cancers (lung, larynx, trachea and bronchus) and, the most recent addition, Type 2 diabetes.

VA also provides benefits for children of Vietnam veterans born with spina bifida and for the children of female Vietnam veterans with certain other birth defects.

A VA toll-free helpline keeps veterans informed of Agent Orange issues. Callers can speak directly to VA representatives Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Central Standard Time, or access a 24-hour automated system. They may leave messages, have information sent to them and listen to recordings about Agent Orange exposure, VA benefits, health care and disability compensation. The number is 1-800-749-8387.

For general information, visit the VA Web site at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov); for information about Agent Orange, including health effects, benefits and services, visit [www.va.gov/agentorange](http://www.va.gov/agentorange).