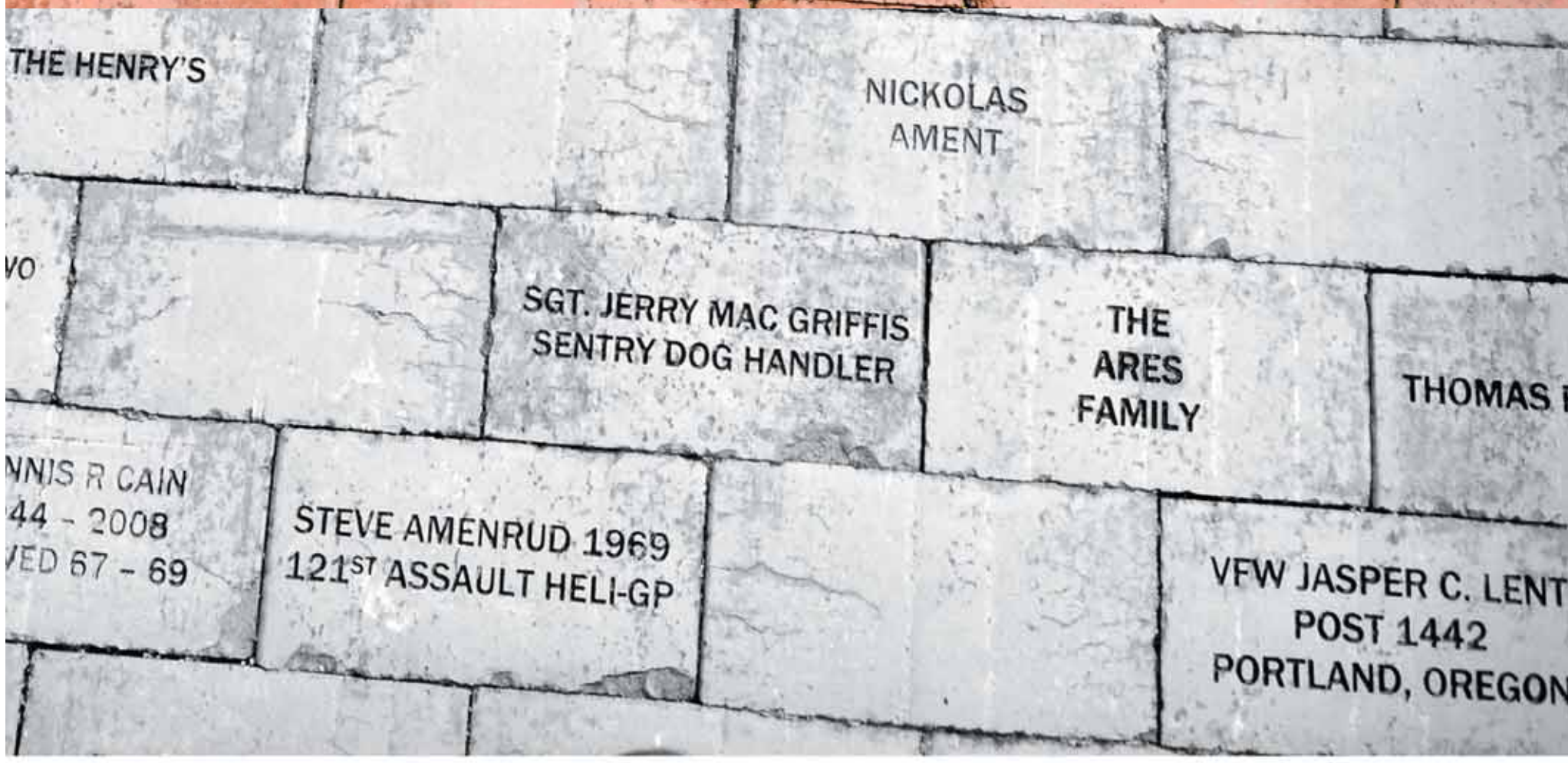


*A commemorative special section highlighting the dedication ceremony for the Vietnam Era Veterans Memorial, Aug. 6, 2011*



*“ May the memorial site be a place of reflection and bring hope for all military, especially the Vietnam-era veterans who gave so much of themselves while serving the United States. Lord, you know, all gave some, some gave all. ”*

— Bill Roberts, Canby Fire District Chaplain



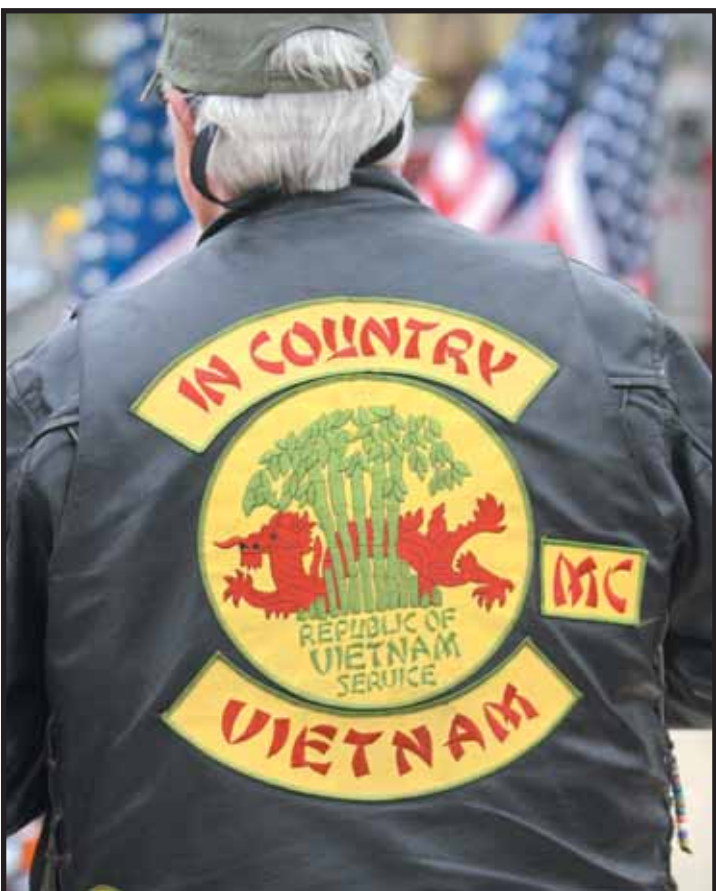
# Emotion

and joy for the moment

“  
*Something like this feels kind of like the country is patting us on the back and welcoming us home. I think this whole thing is a great healing tool. I look at this statue and the memories come flooding back - some aren't good - but it's all part of the process.*

— Clint Baxter, U.S. Marines, Vietnam

”



**F**rom top to bottom, Clint Baxter studied the statue with a keen eye and just a hint of nostalgia.

And for a moment, he's lost in thought — traveling back 40-plus years to a time where men served, fought and died.

Standing in the middle of the Vietnam Era Veterans Memorial Saturday, Baxter was feeling a lot of emotions.

“Something like this feels kind of like the country is patting us on the back and welcoming us home,” he said of the memorial. “I think this whole thing is a great healing tool. I look at this statue and the memories come flooding back — some aren't good — but it's all part of the process.”

The 63-year-old Portland man enlisted in the U.S. Marines and eventually found himself near Saigon when the Tet Offensive broke out.

He fought, watched friends die and then came home to a less than hospitable welcome.

“My experience in Vietnam was very intense,” he said. “I saw combat and I certainly used my weapon. You do that and it stays with you a long, long time.”

Baxter gets choked up as the final words drift from his lips, taking a few moments to compose himself. He sighs loudly, lifts his sunglasses and dabs at moist eyes — four decades past still delivering emotions that can stop a man in his tracks.

“This is good,” he said of the moment. “This is really good.”





Stationed near Da Nang with his unit in 1968, former U.S. Marine Steve Reinhardt reflected on the child in the memorial statue, "A Hero's Prayer," and remembered kids differently during his time in Vietnam.

"You'd make the women and children show you their hands when they came around the base," he said. "When they approached, you'd put your weapon on them and tell them to show you their hands. If they didn't quickly enough or acted suspicious...well, it was dangerous for them."

The reason was simple — the Viet Cong often used children and women to infiltrate grenades or other explosives into an area, sometimes tossing them into trucks or helicopters. Reinhardt said you just learned to check everyone coming and going.

"We talk about suicide bombers today, but those of us who served in Vietnam saw plenty of similar stuff," Reinhardt said. "Imagine, pointing your weapon at women and children — you just never knew."

But walking along the memorial, Reinhardt reflected on the positives that time has delivered for the Vietnam veterans. The times are, indeed, changing.

"It's just a wonderful tribute to the men and women who served in Vietnam — to all veterans, really," he said. "It feels good to be here and part of the event."



Canby's Mike Elario didn't spend much time in Vietnam, though he was in the U.S. Army from 1966 to 1969.

As a crew chief for a Huey helicopter in the 118th Assault Helicopter Unit, he spent 31 days in Vietnam, arriving Jan. 1, then heading home 31 days later with a hole in his helmet that didn't kill him, but a wound that sent him stateside.

Visiting the memorial and taking part in the dedication provided an opportunity to reflect and share stories with other veterans.

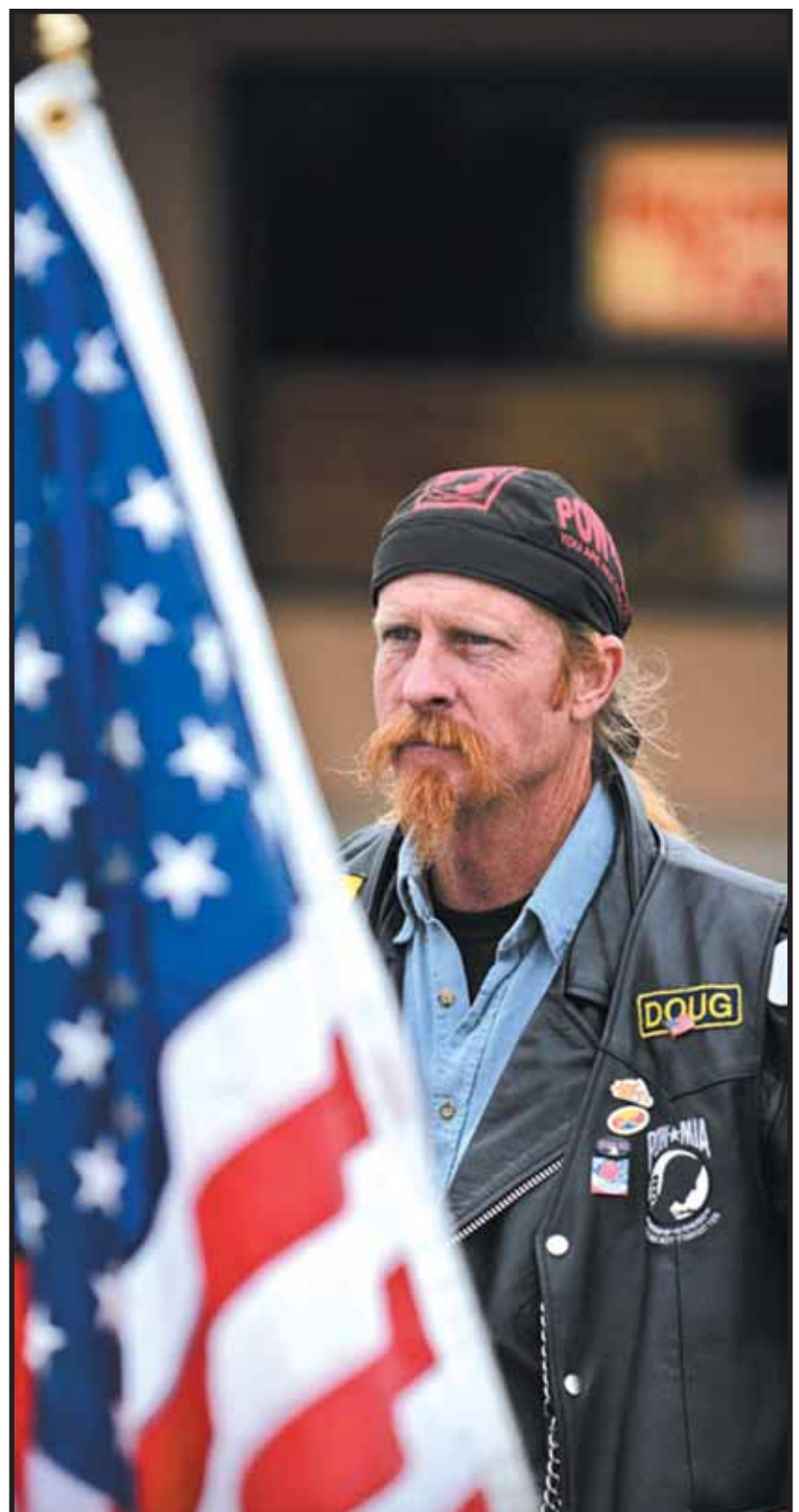
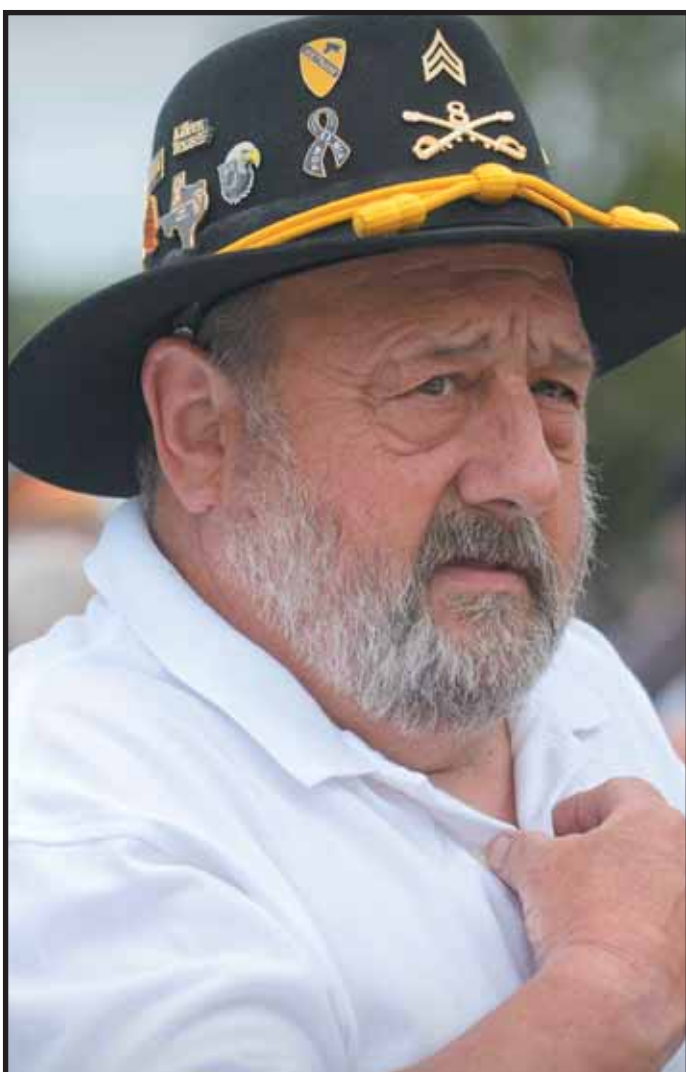
"It's good to see those that made it back," Elario said. "I really wish the Vietnam veterans could have gotten more recognition when they got home. It's nice that they're recognizing the Vietnam and even Korean war veterans now. Things are as resentful as they were when we got home."

"Being here, it is kind of emotional — seeing all the men and women in the armed forces. It brings back a lot of memories."



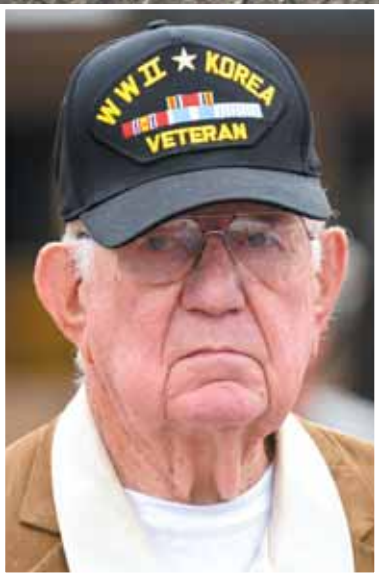
*"It's not the time it took, it's where we find ourselves today. So, on behalf of my fellow Vietnam veterans, I want to say to the entire community of Canby — thank you very much. Thank you so much."*

— Jim Willis, Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs director





*Photos by Ray Hughey  
Stories & Design by John Baker*



**W**ith a back in pain and the prospect of setting up his gear the next day, Ron Kachergius was ready to

call and tell organizers of the Vietnam Era Veterans Memorial dedication ceremony he couldn't make it.

As a member of the Military Vehicle Collector Club of Oregon, Kachergius had planned to be part of the festivities. But his back was letting him down.

But he wasn't out after all. "I was watching a military movie and I just said to myself 'I've got to be there,'" Kachergius said.

And with that, he loaded up his trailer and arrived early Saturday to set up his jeep and "hooch," complete with weapons and accessories. His spot on the lawn near the Richard R. Brown Fine Arts Center looked like a fully functional camp.

Kachergius served in Vietnam from 1968-69 in the Combat Photography 221st Signal Support Unit.

Their task was to document the war on film.

"We lost a couple photographers," he said. "I just can't put into words how you feel when that happens. It's been so many years ago — 43 years — it's hard to remember it. You just have a heartfelt pride in what you've done and a sorrow for those who gave their lives."

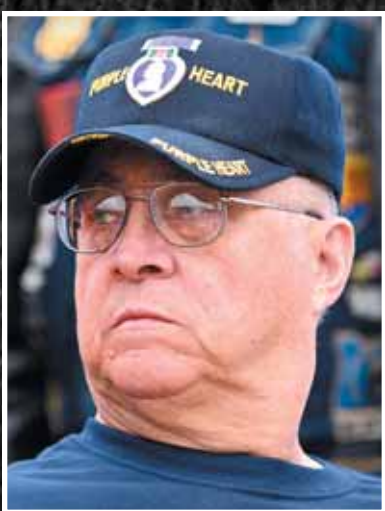
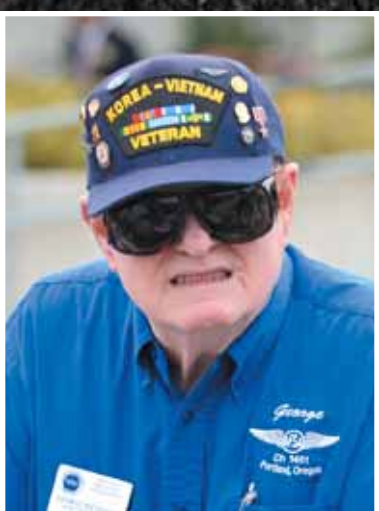
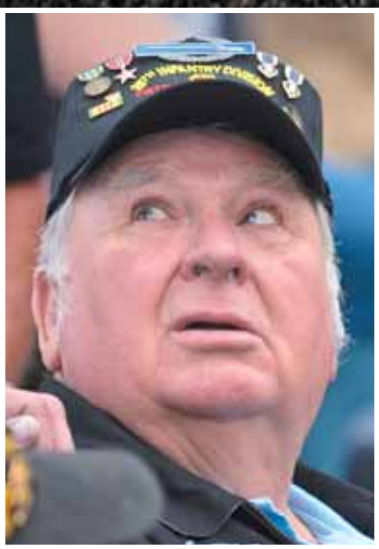
"We all suffer when another soldier dies," he added.

Kachergius has a passion for military vehicles and memorabilia. He's combed the Internet and military shows to provide a realistic look at what an armed jeep looked like, as well as accumulate weapons, radios, maps, identification and other items that make his tent seem to come alive.

It's all part of a tribute he is creating for the 5th Special Forces Group Airborne.

"Over the years, I've just kept accumulating things," he said. "The World War II stuff is popular because there's a romance about that era. Vietnam wasn't particularly valued by people. I enjoy it, though."

*(Ron Kachergius is pictured below, second from the right.)*



Page 1: Background, the Vietnam Era Veterans Memorial's commemorative bricks line the path in and around the memorial, (foreground) the moment that the statue, "A Heroes Prayer," arrived in Canby. Pages 2-3: The people and events that were part of the memorial dedication ceremony on Saturday, Aug. 6, 2011. On this page: We feature the faces of veterans who attended the dedication ceremony — spread across the "shou," (background) a Vietnamese symbol that mean's "long life," that is the walkway of the memorial.