Collection Summary

Title: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Records
Span Dates: 1965-1994
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1978-1985)
ID No.: MSS61695
Creator: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
Extent: 43,700 items ; 125 containers plus 8 oversize ; 53 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Summary: Organization founded for the purpose of erecting a national memorial honoring American veterans of the Vietnam conflict. Administrative files document the operations and technical resources required for the erection of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as well as the surrounding political controversy.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People
Carhart, Tom.
Century, Larry.
Clinton, Bill, 1946-
Copulos, Milton R.
Doubek, Robert W.
Hart, Frederick, 1943-
Lin, Maya Ying.
Scruggs, Jan C.
Sherwood, Carlton.
Webb, James H.

Organizations
Binswanger Glasscraft Products.
Cooper-Lecky Partnership.
Gilbane Building Company.
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

Subjects
Memorial Day.
Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Washington, D.C.)
War memorials--Washington (D.C.)

Administrative Information

Provenance
The records of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund were donated to the Library of Congress in several installments, the first in 1984 upon completion of the memorial. Additional gifts followed, 1985-1999.
Transfers

Photographs, photographic slides, posters, blueprints, and drawings have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division; videotapes, audiotapes, and phonograph records have been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division of the Library of Congress. These transfers are identified as part of the fund's records. A scale model of the memorial has been transferred to the National Park Service, the government agency responsible for the administration of the memorial, along with a large poster and banner associated with the National Salute to Vietnam Veterans.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of members of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The records of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The records of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund span the years 1965-1994, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period between 1978 and 1985. The records document the administrative and operational history of the fund, a nonprofit, charitable organization founded for the purpose of erecting a national memorial honoring American veterans of the Vietnamese Conflict. The fund's files detail all phases of the activities associated with this undertaking, including the design, construction, financing, and promotion of the memorial. The main body of the fund's records is arranged in two series identified as Office Files and Project Director's Files, while documentation of the organization's fund-raising activities is grouped under a separate series. Material relating to the National Salute to Vietnam Veterans (10-14 November 1982), a five-day tribute to Vietnam veterans consisting of commemorative events and the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, is also organized within its own series. Although the original organization of the files maintained by the fund has largely been preserved, some rearrangement was undertaken to achieve consistency and clarity.

Incorporated on 27 April 1979, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund completed its mission in the fall of 1984 with the addition of Frederick Hart's life-size sculpture to the entry plaza of the memorial grounds. Although the vision and determination of a small group of individuals led by Jan C. Scruggs, president of the fund, culminated in a public memorial honoring Americans who served in Vietnam, construction of the memorial had proved divisive, mirroring the political passions and controversies concerning the war. Both the Office Files and Project Director's Files provide the researcher with documentation of the administrative operations and technical resources which affected the building of the memorial as well as of the political controversy which surrounded its construction.

The Office Files contain general administrative records of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund arranged under the following headings: administration, expenses and contracts, fiscal, general subject file, memorial design, project construction, and public relations. The files include architectural drawings, business and financial records, and construction reports. The fund solicited designs for the memorial in open competition and received 1,421 entries in reply. On 1 May 1981, an eight-member jury announced the selection of the design submitted by Maya Ying Lin. The memorial design files contain material relating to the design competition and to Lin's selection, as well as to hearings before the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission, agencies whose approval of the design was necessary before construction could begin. Records concerning Frederick Hart's sculpture are filed under the same heading.

The chevron-shaped, black granite memorial represented a negative symbol to many and was characterized by Tom Carhart, a prominent critic, as "a black gash of shame and sorrow." Material documenting Carhart's criticism and that of
others concerned with the controversial design, including Milton R. Copulos, H. Ross Perot, Carlton Sherwood, and James H. Webb, is contained under the memorial design heading within the Office Files. Other records concerning Sherwood, an investigative reporter whose series, “Vietnam Memorial: A Broken Promise,” was televised on the local news broadcasts of WDVM-TV, Washington, D.C., 7-10 November 1983, are in the public relations files.

In 1981, the fund engaged the Cooper-Lecky Partnership, an architectural firm, to assist Maya Ying Lin in developing her design and Gilbane Building Company to manage its construction. Files located under expenses and contracts relate to these and other companies employed by the fund to build the memorial.

Verifying and inscribing the names of the war dead on the memorial’s panels posed major administrative and technical problems. Binswanger Glasscraft Products was awarded the contract for inscribing the names and, with the aid of a new stenciling technique designed by independent inventor Larry Century, completed the inscriptions in three months. The Office Files series contains material relating to names and inscriptions in the project construction files, which also include a complete set of blueprints for the memorial and its surrounding area.

As project director, Robert W. Doubek, a cofounder of the fund, was also directly responsible for the design and construction of the memorial. As a result, while the Office Files are more comprehensive in scope, the records in the Files of the Project Director series more fully reflect the administrative and technical aspects of Doubek's dual responsibilities. Since the Office Files and Project Director’s Files contain similar types of records, both series should be consulted to insure complete coverage of a particular topic.

The Addition series contains material arranged subsequent to the initial organization of the Fund’s records. Items in the series document activities surrounding the tenth anniversary celebration of the memorial in 1992 and Memorial Day ceremonies held at the memorial in 1993. The series also contains printouts and registration labels of entrants in the memorial design competition, as well as working copies of printouts listing the veterans whose names were inscribed on the memorial.

In order to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the fund sponsored a year-long program of special events culminating on Veterans Day, 11 November 1992. As part of this program, the fund presented a series of educational seminars on various topics analyzing the effects of the Vietnam War on America. The Addition contains transcripts from most of these seminars as well as from the Veterans Day commemoration ceremony held at the memorial wall. The Addition also includes informational pamphlets and printed items promoting the anniversary events. Correspondence and miscellaneous items relating to the participation of President Bill Clinton in the Memorial Day ceremony of 1993 consists chiefly of letters from veterans reacting to the president's presence at the event.

**Organization of the Papers**

The collection is arranged in eight series:

- **Office Files, 1979-1985**
- **Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984**
- **National Salute to Vietnam Veterans, 1979-1983**
- **Fund-raising, 1979-1984**
- **Miscellany, 1966-1985**
- **Card Files, circa 1980-circa 1984**
- **Addition, 1980-1994**
- **Oversize, 1980-1982**
## Description of Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1-55</td>
<td><strong>Office Files, 1979-1985</strong></td>
<td>General administrative files consisting of correspondence, memoranda, telephone reports, legal and financial records, minutes of meetings, reports, blueprints and construction plans, notes, press releases, postcards, maps, illustrations, photographs, speeches and writings, and printouts. Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 56-89</td>
<td><strong>Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984</strong></td>
<td>Administrative records maintained by the project director containing material similar in nature to the office files. Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 90-99</td>
<td><strong>National Salute to Vietnam Veterans, 1979-1983</strong></td>
<td>Correspondence, memoranda, telephone reports, financial and legal records, notes, poems and songs, press releases, printed matter, and card files relating to the organization and promotion of the National Salute to Vietnam Veterans, 10-14 Nov. 1982. Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 100-121</td>
<td><strong>Fund-raising, 1979-1984</strong></td>
<td>Correspondence, memoranda, financial records, minutes of meetings, reports, card files, and form letters relating to fund-raising activities. Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 121-123</td>
<td><strong>Miscellany, 1966-1985</strong></td>
<td>Correspondence, telephone message books, address book, notes and posters, poems and songs, memorabilia, printed matter, and plaques. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically thereunder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 124-OV 130</td>
<td><strong>Card Files, circa 1980-circa 1984</strong></td>
<td>Invitations to the National Salute to Vietnam Veterans and donor card files. The latter are arranged alphabetically by donor group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 131-132</td>
<td><strong>Addition, 1980-1994</strong></td>
<td>Correspondence, transcripts, promotional material, printouts, registration labels, printed matter, and miscellaneous items concerning ceremonial tributes and various aspects of the memorial's design. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically thereunder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 1</td>
<td><strong>Oversize, 1980-1982</strong></td>
<td>Oversize material consisting of printouts. Organized and described according to the series, boxes, and folders from which the items were removed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1-55</td>
<td><strong>Office Files, 1979-1985</strong>&lt;br&gt;General administrative files consisting of correspondence, memoranda, telephone reports, legal and financial records, minutes of meetings, reports, blueprints and construction plans, notes, press releases, postcards, maps, illustrations, photographs, speeches and writings, and printouts.&lt;br&gt;Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial reports, charitable solicitations, 1979-1984
Tax exemptions, 1980-1984
Inventory, 1983-1984
National Information Bureau, 1980-1984
National League of Families of POWs and MIAs, 1981-1984

BOX 3
Nonprofit corporation, undated
Personnel
  Biographies, 1979-1982, undated
  Correspondence and memoranda, 1980-1984
  Phaseout, 1983-1984
  Salaries, 1981-1984
  Volunteers, 1983-1984
Reports
  "How Goes It" reports
    May-Dec. 1982
    Jan.-Apr. 1983

BOX 4
  May-Nov. 1983
  Jan.-July 1984
  Report to Congress, 1983
Veterans organizations
  American Legion, 1981-1984
  American Veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam, 1983-1984
  Disabled American Veterans, 1979-1984

BOX 5
Miscellany, 1983-1984
Paralyzed Veterans of America, 1982-1983
  Stars and Stripes, 1984
United Vietnam Veterans Organization, 1983
Veterans Administration, 1983-1984
Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1981-1984
Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 1982
Vietnam Veterans of America, 1981-1984
Vietnam Veterans Project, 1982-1984

Expenses and contracts
  Accountants
    Frank, Stefanou and Co., 1980-1984

BOX 6
Board of directors, 1981-1984
Construction and services
  Action Graphics, 1983
  Archer Courier Systems, 1984
  ATEC Associates, 1982
  Barbieri and Green, 1980-1984
  Barrett Colea, 1982
  Beltway Alarms, 1982-1984
  Bleier, Rocky, 1982
  Burrelle's Press Clipping Service, 1981-1983
Burroughs, 1982, undated
Campbell, Peachey and Associates, 1982-1983
Canzeri Co., 1982-1983
Century, Lucas, 1983-1984
Colorlab, 1982-1983

BOX 7
COMCOR, 1984
Cooper-Lecky Partnership
  Contract, 1983-1984
  Correspondence, 1981-1985
  Invoices, 1981-1985
    (2 folders)
Datatlantic, 1982-1984
Drescher Productions, 1982-1984

BOX 8
EDAW, 1983-1984
FDE Limited, 1981-1982
Gilbane Building Co.
  Contract, 1981
  Correspondence, 1981-1984
  Invoices
    Nos.
      1-8, Jan.-Dec. 1982
    (2 folders)

BOX 9
  9-24, Nov. 1982-Apr. 1984
    (6 folders)

BOX 10
  25-30, May-Dec. 1984
    (3 folders)
Guardian Communications, 1984-1985
Hargrove, Inc., 1982-1984
Hart, Frederick, 1982-1984
  (2 folders)
Hartz/Meek International, 1984
Hayes, Thomas J., 1981
Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum, 1982-1984
Interactive Technology, 1982, undated

BOX 11
Joel Meisner and Co., 1983-1985
Kahn-Oppenheimer, 1982-1984
Kaufman Public Relations, 1982-1983
Knobby Krafters, 1980-1982
Miller, K. W., 1983-1984
Miscellany, 1980-1984
Mosley, Arthur C., 1980-1984
National Fundraising Lists
  1982-1983

BOX 12
  1984-1985
National Personnel Records, 1982-1983
Odd Jobs, 1982-1983
Oles, Paul Stevenson, 1981-1982
Oram Group, 1982-1984
PR Aids, 1981-1984
Rogan Granitindustrie, 1982-1984
Schaet, Donald, 1982
Scott Security, 1982-1984
Self-Service Storage, 1984
Walsh-Thompson Associates, 1982
WETA, 1982-1983
Wood and Stone, 1983

Consultants
Bailey, Charles, 1982-1984
Bigelow, Charles, 1982
Creative Mailing Consultants of America, 1980-1983
DCM Group, 1983-1984
Fischer, Victor J., 1980
Tyl Associates, 1982-1983

Design competition
Invoices, 1980-1981
Jury, 1981
Spreieregen, Paul, 1980-1984

Legal
Arent, Fox, Kintner, Plotkin and Kahn, 1981-1983
Hogan and Hartson, 1980-1981
Hopkins, Bruce R., 1982-1983
Williams and Connolly, 1982-1984

Fiscal
Audit
Accounting procedures, 1982-1984
Financial statements, 1980-1984
Fiscal improprieties, allegations of, 1984

General Accounting Office
Correspondence, 1983-1984
(2 folders)

Costs, 1984, undated
Press conference, 23 May 1984
Report, 23 May 1984
Response to report, 1984
Independent Audit Committee, 1981-1984
Reports, 1983-1984
WDVM audit, 1983
Balance sheets, 1980-1984
Bank accounts
   American Security Bank, 1982
   First American Bank, 1981-1984
   Riggs National Bank, 1980-1984
Bounced checks, 1980-1983
Budget, projected, 1982-1984
Costs of memorial, stewardship report, 1982-1983, undated
Disposition of excess funds, 1983
Insurance
   All risks coverage, 1984
   Bond insurance, 1981-1984
   Comprehensive general liability
      Century, Larry, 1983-1984, undated
   Merkin Co., 1981-1984, undated
Directors and officers liability, 1981-1984
Fire insurance, 1983-1984
Granite wall, 1982
Sculpture, 1983-1984
Worker's compensation, 1983-1984
Internal Revenue Service, 1979-1984
Investments
   Fund for Government Investors, 1982
   Merrill Lynch, 1981-1984
   Paine Webber, 1980-1984
Lascola, Anna, estate of, 1984-1985
General subject file
   Corporate advisory board, 1982-1984

Directory of Names
   Complaints, 1983-1984
   Defense Department, casualties list, undated
      Vols.
         1
BOX 16
      2-3
         (2 folders)
BOX 17
      4-5
         (2 folders)
BOX 18
      6
Distribution, 1983-1984, undated
Printed copies
   First printing, 1982
BOX 19
   Second and third printings, 1982-1983
      (2 folders)
BOX 20
   Fourth printing, 1984
Printout, undated
   Alphabetical listing
# Office Files, 1979-1985

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| BOX 24    | Chronological listing  
Sales  
Kiosk sales, 1983-1984  
Mail order, 1983-1984, undated  
(1 folder) |
| BOX 25    | (2 folders)  
Thank-you letters, 1983  
Fund-raising, 1980-1984  
Intern program, 1981-1982 |
| BOX 26    | Memoranda, 1981-1984  
National Sponsoring Committee, 1979-1985  
Auerbach, Arnold "Red"  
Bailey, Pearl  
Barry, Marion  
Bleier, Rocky  
Bonilla, Ruben  
Brochure design sheets  
Bunker, Ellsworth  
Carter, Jimmy and Rosalynn  
Cleland, Max  
Corrada, Baltasar  
Cosell, Howard  
Davison, Michael S.  
Ford, Gerald and Betty  
Goldwater, Barry  
Hesburgh, Theodore  
Hope, Bob  
Jones, David C.  
Jordan, Vernon E.  
McGovern, George  
Rejections  
Reports  
Rowan, Carl T.  
Saldana, Lupe  
Stargell, Willie  
Staubach, Roger  
Stewart, Jimmy, 1981-1982  
Stockdale, James B.  
Thayer, Paul  
Vance, Cyrus  
Vessey, John W.  |
| BOX 27    | Walters, Harry N.  
Warner, John W.  
Westmoreland, William C.  
Zengerle, Joseph C.  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 28</td>
<td>Minnesota, 1981-1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellany, 1981-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Hampshire, 1981-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Jersey, 1981-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New York, 1980-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina, 1981-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ohio, 1981-1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pennsylvania, 1981-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Carolina, 1982-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Virginia, 1981-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State officials, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tasks remaining, lists of, 1983-1984, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 29</td>
<td>Memorial design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commission of Fine Arts, meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 Feb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19 Apr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 Sept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 Oct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construction, 1981-1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Controversy and criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bailey, Donald, 1982, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carhart, Tom, 1981-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 30</td>
<td>Congressional reaction, 1981-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copulos, Milton R., 1981-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fales, John, 1983-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowenfish, Joshua D., 1981-1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellany, 1982-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perot, H. Ross, 1981-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 31</td>
<td>Sherwood, Carlton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence and miscellany, 1983-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2 folders)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Office Files, 1979-1985

Container Contents

Rebuttal, supporting documents, 1979-1983, undated
Vols.
1-2
(2 folders)

BOX 32
3
Warner, John, press release, 1982
Design approval
Design competition
Budget, 1980-1981, undated
Entrants, 1981-1983
Jurors, 1981-1983, undated
Jury statement, 1981, undated
Rules, 1980-1982, undated
Exhibits
AIA and Octagon exhibit, 1981-1982

BOX 33
Miscellany, 1981-1984
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., 1984
Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program, 1984
Fact sheets, 1980, undated
Inscriptions, 1981-1983
Interior Department, 1981-1983
Legislation, 1979-1983, undated
Lin, Maya Ying, 1981-1984
Miscellany, 1980-1982

BOX 34
Name verifications, 1981-1982
National Capital Planning Commission, meetings
1983
3 Mar.
5 May
7 July
4 Aug.
6 Oct.
National Endowment for the Arts
Application, 1981, undated
Art in Public Places, 1980-1983
Drescher grant, 1982
EDAW grant, 1980-1981
Oles, Paul, drawing, 1981-1982
Sculptors
Announcement, 1982
Correspondence, 1982-1983
(2 folders)
Sculpture
Approval, 1984
Office Files, 1979-1985

Container    | Contents
---           | ---

**BOX 35**

- Bronze casting, 1983-1984
- Clay model, 1984
- Compromise agreement, 1982, undated
- Minorities, 1979-1984
- Panel, 1982
- Reproduction, 1982-1984
- Selection of design, 1981-1982, undated
- Unveiling of model, 1982, undated
- Site selection, 1979-1980, undated

**BOX 36**

- Project construction
  - Blueprints and plans
    - Entry plaza, phase III, 1982-1983, undated
    - Miscellany, undated
  - Chain and stanchion, 1984
  - Change orders, 1982-1984
  - Construction schedule, 1983-1984
  - Consultants and contractors list, 1983-1984
  - Correspondence, 1981-1984
  - Cracks in memorial, 1985
  - Entry plaza, phase III, 1983-1984

**BOX 37**

- Flag pole base, 1982-1984
- Groundbreaking
  - Ceremonies, 26 Mar. 1982
  - Letters of thanks, 1982-1983, undated
  - Public support for memorial, 1982
  - (2 folders)

**BOX 38**

- Landscaping, 1983-1984
- Lighting, 1982-1984
  - (2 folders)

**BOX 39**

- Memorial area, phase IV, 1983-1984, undated
- Name directory locators, 1983-1984
- Names (inscriptions)
  - Additions
    - 1982-1983
    - 1984
- Buis, Dale R., 1983, undated
- Civilians, 1982-1985
- Complaints (names not inscribed)
  - 1981-1983

**BOX 40**

- 1984

**BOX 41**

- Corrections
  - Misspellings, 1983-1984
  - Notification, 1983-1984
  - Repairs to memorial wall, 1983
Status changes, 1983-1984
Correspondence and memoranda, 1982-1984
Cramer, Harry G., 1983

BOX 42
Curbwall panel credits, 1984
Defense Department, 1982-1984
Miscellany, 1983-1984, undated
Requests against inscription, 1982-1983
Women veterans and nurses, 1980-1984
National Park Service
Bender, John L., 1984, undated
Conveyance of memorial, 1984, undated
Correspondence, 1983-1985
Rules and regulations, 1982-1984

BOX 43
Volunteer guides, 1983-1984
Panel replacement, 1983-1984
Pathways and granite sets, 1983-1984
Project review meetings
Agenda, 1982-1984
Reports, 1982-1984
Punch list, 1983-1984
Reports (monthly)
Apr.-June 1982

BOX 44
July-Sept. 1982
Restoration, phase II, 1983, undated
Sculpture installation and maintenance, 1984, undated
Security, 1982-1983
Sprinkler system, 1984
Technical specifications, 1982-1983
Unveiling ceremonies, 21 July 1982
Public relations
Articles, 1983-1984
Awards, 1982-1984
Ceremonies
Memorial Day
1980-1981
1982-1983
(3 folders)
BOX 45
Veterans Day
1983
1984
Commemorative stamp
National Salute II

BOX 46
1984-1985
(2 folders)

BOX 47
Organization
(2 folders)
Press kit
### Office Files, 1979-1985

**Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sculpture unveiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broyles, William, 1983-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laingen, L. Bruce, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laird, Melvin R., 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mathias, Charles McC., 1979-1982, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellany, 1980-1984, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richardson, Elliot L., 1981-1984, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BOX 48</strong></td>
<td>Thompson, Alf R., 1981-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weinberger, Caspar W., 1982-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White House, 1981-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedication, 13 Nov. 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrations, 1982-1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edelman, Daniel J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence, 1980-1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellany, 1980-1983, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reports, 1981, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Film projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drescher, Hugh, 1982, undated</td>
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<td>Miscellany, 1983-1984</td>
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<td>WETA, 1982-1983</td>
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<td>York/Wiley Productions, 1982-1983</td>
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<td>White House, 1981-1983</td>
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<td>Newspapers and wire services, 1980-1984</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Press conference, 9 Nov. 1983</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BOX 51</strong></td>
<td>Press releases, 1980-1984</td>
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<td>Radio, 1981-1983</td>
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<td>&quot;60 Minutes,&quot; 1982</td>
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<td><em>Soldier of Fortune</em>, 1983-1984</td>
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<td>Syndicated columnists, 1981-1984</td>
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<td>Television, 1980-1984</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Office Files, 1979-1985

**Container** | **Contents**
--- | ---

**BOX 52**
- Tours, undated
  - (3 folders)
- Panel unveiling, 1982
- Photographs, 1982-1983, undated
- Polls
  - Copulos, Milton R., 1982-1983, undated
  - Decision Making Information, 1982, undated
- Postcards, maps, and illustrations, 1982-1984

**BOX 53**
- Program souvenir, 1983-1984
- Reflections on the memorial, 1983, undated
- Resolutions and proclamations, 1981-1982
- Speeches, 1979-1983
  - (2 folders)
- Statements, 1981, undated
- Symposia
  - "The Vietnam Generation and Reconciliation"
    - Correspondence, 1982-1983, undated
    - Draft copy, 1982

**BOX 54**
- Printed copy, 1982
- Workshop, 11 Nov. 1982
- Unit reunion registration, 1983, undated
- Vietnam veteran fact sheet, 1982, undated
- War memorials
  - Korean War Memorial, 1984, undated
  - Other Vietnam memorials, 1982-1984

**BOX 55**
- South Boston Vietnam Memorial, Boston, Mass., 1981, undated
  - (2 folders)
  - *The Wounded Generation*
    - Distribution, 1979-1983, undated
    - Miscellany, 1980, undated
    - Transcript, *Washington Post* meeting, 12 May 1980

**BOX 56-89**
- Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984
  - Administrative records maintained by the project director containing material similar in nature to the office files.
  - Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder.

**BOX 56**
- Administration
  - Board of advisors, 1979-1980
  - Budget, 1980
  - Employment memoranda and contracts, 1980
Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984

Container       Contents

Internal Revenue Service, 1979-1981, undated
Legal committee, 1979
Legal counsel, 1980, undated
Organizational charts, 1979-1980
Postal permits, 1979-1981
Trademark search, 1980
Vacation, 1980

Approval process
Commission of Fine Arts, meetings
1981
7 July
13 Oct.
10 Nov.
1982
9 Mar.
13 Oct.

BOX 57
14 Dec.

1983
8 Feb.
19 Apr.

Design concept, 1981-1983
Environmental assessment, 1981

Joint Committee on Landmarks, 1981, undated
National Capital Memorial Advisory Committee, 1981

National Capital Planning Commission, meetings
1981
6 Aug.
3 Dec.
1982
18 Feb.
4 Mar.
1983
3 Mar.
5 May

BOX 58
Predesign agency liaison, 1980-1981
Request for certification, 1982
State historic preservation officer, 1981
Watt, James, 1981-1982

Fund-raising
Benefit dinner dance, 1980
Correspondence and memoranda
Program design sheets
Butera, James, project, 1980
Correspondence and notes, 1979-1980
Creative Mailing Consultants of America, 1980-1981
Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984

Container | Contents
--- | ---

**BOX 59**
- Disabled American Veterans, initiative, 1981
- Gifts and counsel selection, 1980, undated
- Operational memoranda, 1980-1981, undated
- *Parade* magazine, undated
- Semple, Steuber, and Cole, 1980, undated

Legislation
- Congressional
  - Conference committee, 1980, undated
  - U.S. House of Representatives, 1979-1980, undated
  - U.S. Senate
    - Attachments to testimony, 1978-1980, undated
  - Legislation, 1979-1980

**BOX 60**
- General file, 1979-1980

Liaison correspondence
- Congress, 1979-1980
- Defense Department, 1979-1980
- Executive branch, 1979-1980
- National Endowment for the Arts, 1980
- Republican and Democratic national committee endorsements, 1980
- States, 1980
- Veterans Administration, 1979
- Veterans organizations, 1979-1980

Memorial design
- Construction team organization
  - Architect selection, 1981, undated
- Construction manager
  - Proposals
- Turner Construction Co., 1981

**BOX 61**
- Selection, 1981, undated

Contracts
- Cooper-Lecky Partnership, 1981
- Gilbane Building Co., 1981, undated
- Lin, Maya Ying, 1981, undated
- Spreiregen, Paul A., 1981
- Lin, Maya Ying, summer hours, 1981-1982, undated

Special projects, 1981

**BOX 62**
- Controversy and other problems
  - Bailey, Donald, legislation, 1982-1983
  - Briefing for Michael S. Davison, 1981, undated
  - Compromise criticism, 1982, undated
  - Exit poll, 1982, undated
  - Foreign granite, complaints, 1981-1982
  - Jury
    - Criticism, 1981-1982, undated
Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984

Letter to James Watt, 1981, undated
Lowenfish, Joshua, 1981-1982
Marine Corps League, 1981
Meeting, 11 Mar. 1982
Opponents press conference, 4 Dec. 1982
Outline of events, 1981-1982

"Questions and Answers" on design, undated
Temporary flag staff, 1982
Wall Street Journal editorial response, June 1981
Watson, Francis M., 1981

Design competition
Administration
  Deadline, 1981
  Disqualification, 1981
  Form letters, 1981
  Registration forms, undated
  Registration of competitors, 1980-1981
  Return of designs, 1981-1982
Announcement
  Architectural schools, undated
  Landscape architects, 1980, undated

List of programs, 1980
Press releases, 1980, undated

Comments and criticism
  Competitors' comments, 1981
  Compliments, 1981
  Editorials, 1981
  Jaworski/Westerman report, 1981, undated
Crank entries, 1981

Documents
  Competition documents, 1980-1981, undated
  (2 folders)

Competition planning, 1980
Design programs and maps, 1980
Purpose and philosophy, 1980, undated
"Questions and Answers"
  Competitors' questions, 1980-1981
  Printed copy, 1981
Rule book, 1984, undated

Entries and winners
  Final report, 28 May 1981
  Late entries, 1981, undated
Exhibits
Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984

Container          Contents

BOX 66
Octagon exhibit, 11 Nov. 1981
Pension Building, 1981, undated
Jury
Background and interviews, 1980, undated
Correspondence, 1980-1981
Jurors, 1980, undated
Jury instruction, 26 Apr. 1981
Report, 1981
Logistics and projects
Armed Forces Day, 9 May 1980
Congressional reception, 1981, undated
Display facility, 1981
Display logistics, 1980-1981, undated
Guard services, 1981, undated
BOX 67
Jury week and jury dinner, 1981
Press conference, 6 May 1981
Miscellany, 1980-1981, undated
Zimmerman, Elyn, 1979-1981, undated
Designer selection
Design competition manuals, 1979-1981, undated
Inquiries, 1980-1981, undated
Selection method, 1980, undated
Development and construction
ATEC Associates, steel and concrete inspections, 1982
Boring and jacking, 1982
BOX 68
Construction process
Certificate of substantial completion and punch list, 1982, undated
Gilbane Building Co., monthly reports, 1982
Job control binder, undated
Costs and changes
Binswanger Glasscraft Products, 1982, undated
Change orders, 1981-1983
BOX 69
Change proposals and estimates, 1981-1983
Correspondence and authorizations, 1982-1983
Guaranteed maximum price and cost estimates, 1981-1982
Cost and invoices
Cooper-Lecky Partnership, 1983
EDAW, 1982-1983
Enkamat, 1982, undated
Entry plaza, phase III
Cost estimates, bids, and change orders, 1983, undated
Design team, 1982
Gilbane Building Co./Cooper-Lecky Partnership correspondence, 1983
Granite, 1983
Lighting, 1983
Line marker dots, 1983

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Records
Name locators and flag base, 1983, undated
Notes, 1982-1983

**BOX 70**
Site review meetings, 1983
Specifications, undated
Walkways, 1983
Granite infill, 1982
Miscellany, 1981-1982, undated
National Park Service
- Comments on memorial, 1982, undated
- Construction permit, 1982
- Meetings, 1981-1982
- Special use permit, 1982
Project manual, undated
Schnable Engineering Associates
- Gradation test, 1983
- Proposal, 1983
- Reports, 1982-1983

**BOX 71**
Site restoration, phase II
- Costs and change orders, 1983, undated
- Drainage condition summary, 1982-1983, undated
- National Park Service, 1982-1983
- Notes, 1982-1983
- Post dedication inspection report, 1982
- Specifications and tests, 1982-1983
Site walk-through, 1982
Special projects
- Benson, John, 1981-1982
- Electronic directory, 1982, undated
Name locator
- Alternate name locator devices, 1982, undated
- Submittal, 1983
- Specifications for "Dots," 1983
Specifications
- Addendum no. 1, 1982
- Cooper-Lecky Partnership
  - Alternate inscription locations, 1981
  - Fee estimates, 1982-1983, undated
  - Inscriptions, MIAs, and locator, 1981, undated
- Schedules, 1981, undated

**BOX 72**
Enlarging inscriptions, 1982
Miscellany, 1981-1982
Technical specifications, undated
Subcontractors and suppliers
Bidding
- Bid comparison sheets, 1981-1982
- Bidders list, 1981-1982
Century, Larry, 1981-1982
Invitations to bid, 1981-1982
Prospective suppliers, 1981, undated
Cooper-Lecky Partnership
   Binswanger Glasscraft Products, 1982
   Granite sample evaluation, 1982
Gilbane Building Co., 1982
   Granite testing, 1981-1982
   Landscaping, 1982, undated
Rogan Granitindustrie, 1981-1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX 73</th>
<th>Team meetings</th>
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<td>Datatlantic, 1982-1983</td>
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<td>Panel proof transmittals, 1982</td>
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Public comment
Compliments and contributions, 1980-1982, undated
(1 folder)

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<th>BOX 75</th>
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Public letters See Container 101 and Container 122, same heading

Sculpture
Cooper-Lecky Partnership
   Display case design, 1982
   Location of sculpture, 1982
Copyright, 1983

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<tr>
<th>BOX 82</th>
<th>EDAW, unveiling proposal, 1982</th>
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<td>Hart, Frederick, contract negotiations, 1982</td>
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Special design projects
Flag, 1981-1982, undated
Inscription, 1981-1982, undated

Miscellany
Documentary film proposal, 1981
Drescher, Hugh, film project, 1982, undated
Fischer, Vic, reconciliation symposium, 1980
National Day of Recognition, 23 Apr. 1981
Seven Locks Jaycees, 1980-1982
Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of Vietnam, 1978-1980
Unveiling of first panel, 1982, undated
Vietnam Veterans of America, Long Island, N.Y., chapter, undated

Names and inscriptions
Additions and corrections
Century, Larry, 1983, undated
Correspondence and notes, 1982-1983

BOX 83
Defense Department, 1982-1983
Directory of Names, changes
Pending, 1983
Second printing, 1982, undated
Eligibility, 1982-1983
Miscellany, 1982-1983, undated
Names removed, 1981-1982
Press inquiries, 1982-1983

Inclusion of names
Casualties prior to 1961, 1981-1982
Coates and Menton, 1980-1982, undated
United States armed forces

BOX 84
Army, 1982, undated

MIAs/POWs
Dates of casualty, 1979
Defense Intelligence Agency list, 1981, undated


Sources
Defense Department, 1980-1983
National Archives and Records Administration, 1981-1982, undated

BOX 85
Spelling verification
Correspondence and worksheets, 1981-1982
Hispanic names, 1982, undated
Miscellany, 1982, undated
National Personnel Records Center
Correspondence, 1981-1982
Spelling corrections, undated
  (1 folder)

BOX 86
Special names, 1980-1982
Statistical data
  Casualty list breakdown, 1980, undated
  Press release, 1983
  Report, undated
  Women casualties, undated
Unique names, 1982, undated
Operation and interpretation of memorial
  Brochure, 1982-1983
  Broken panel contingency plan, 1983, undated
Ceremonial committee, 1979-1984

DIRECTORY OF NAMES
  Bids on typesetting and printing, 1982, undated
  Distribution, 1982-1983

BOX 87
Specification and development, 1982, undated
Handicapped parking, 1982
Miscellany, 1980-1983, undated
Regulation against demonstrations, 1982-1983
Vietnam Vigil Society, 1982-1983
Volunteer guides, 1982-1983

PUBLIC RELATIONS
Correspondence
  Congressional, 1979-1980
  General Correspondence, 1980, undated
  Ernest Wittenberg Associates, 1980, undated
  Hope, Bob, July 1980
  Mathias, Charles McC., reception, 24 June 1980
  (2 folders)

BOX 88
Memorial Day, 1980
Notes, 1980, undated
Press releases, 1979, undated
Proposals, 1980-1981
  (2 folders)
  Senate passage, 30 Apr. 1980
  Signing ceremony, 1 July 1980
  Staff biographies, undated
  Task group, 1979-1980, undated

BOX 89
Wheeler, John P., Reader’s Digest article, undated
Zip code, 1980
Site selection (EDAW study), 1980
Special projects
  Dedication ceremony, 1982, undated
**Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Memorial Day, 1980-1983 (3 folders)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 90-99</td>
<td><strong>National Salute to Vietnam Veterans, 1979-1983</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence, memoranda, telephone reports, financial and legal records, notes, poems and songs, press releases, printed matter, and card files relating to the organization and promotion of the National Salute to Vietnam Veterans, 10-14 Nov. 1982. Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 90</td>
<td>Accommodations and services, 1982, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Airlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Art exhibits</td>
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<td>Campsites</td>
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<td>Hargrove, Inc.</td>
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<td>Portable toilets for paralyzed veterans</td>
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<td>Restaurants</td>
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<td>Sheraton Washington Hotel</td>
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<td>Sleeping bag accommodations</td>
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<td>Information requests, 1981-1982, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 91</td>
<td>Mailing lists, 1982, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open house, 1982, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceremonies, 1981-1983, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bleacher seats</td>
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<td>Dedication</td>
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<td>Entertainment showcase</td>
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<td>BOX 92</td>
<td>Invitations, card file <em>See Container 124, National Salute to Vietnam Veterans</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>&quot;Young Vets&quot; choral group</td>
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<td>BOX 93</td>
<td>Correspondence and telephone reports, 1982-1983</td>
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<td>Financial records</td>
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**Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Records**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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| BOX 94    | National Transit Advertising  
|           | Prentice-Hall  
|           | Projection Inc.  
|           | Safway Steel Products  
|           | Sheraton-Carlton Hotel  
|           | Sheraton Washington Hotel  
|           | Tyl Associates  
|           | WPKX  
|           | Income, 1982, undated  
|           | Account book  
|           | Bleacher seat sales  
|           | Booth rental  
|           | Buttons, banners, and other mementos  
|           | Entertainers' salute  
| BOX 95    | Floats  
|           | Program souvenirs  
|           | Letters of congratulation, 1982-1983, undated  
|           | Military unit reunion  
|           | Booths, 1982, undated  
|           | Entertainment file, 1979-1982, undated  
|           | A-R  
|           | (2 folders)  
| BOX 96    | S-Z  
|           | Miscellany, 1982  
|           | Planning and promotion, 1981-1983  
|           | American Legion  
|           | Buttons, banners, balloons, and other mementos  
|           | Candlelight vigil  
|           | Corporate support  
|           | Correspondence  

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Records
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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</table>
| BOX 97    | Film, TV, and radio projects  
            | Housing  
            | Metro  
            | Miscellany  
            | Operations plan  
            | (2 folders)  
            | Press kits |
| BOX 98    | Public relations guide  
            | Publicity  
            | Registrants  
            | Tyl Associates  
            | Volunteer coordination  
            | White House  
            | Proclamations, 1981-1982  
            | Program souvenir, 1982-1983, undated  
            | Advertisers |
            | (2 folders) |
| BOX 100-121 | **Fund-raising, 1979-1984**  
            | Correspondence, memoranda, financial records, minutes of meetings, reports, card files, and form letters relating to fund-raising activities  
            | Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder. |
| BOX 100   | Campaign plan, 1981, undated  
            | Case statement, 1981  
            | Consultant proposals, 1979-1980  
            | Contributions  
            | Account books, 1979-1984  
            | (2 folders)  
            | Donor card files  
            | Corporations *See Container 125, same heading*  
            | "In Memoria" contributions *See Container 126, same heading*  
            | Unions *See Container 127, same heading*  
            | Veterans organizations *See Containers 128-129, same heading*  
            | VIP gifts *See Container 130, same heading* |
| BOX 101   | Microfiche donor lists  
            | Located in microfiche cabinet  
            | Public letters, 1981-1982 *See also Container 122, same heading* |
Thank-you letters
    (2 folders)
BOX 102
  Apr. 1983-July 1984
    (3 folders)
BOX 103
  Correspondence, 1981-1982
  Correspondent lists, 1981, undated
    Clark, Wes
    Corporations
    Dedication ceremony
    Favorite correspondents
    Foundations
    Friends and fund-raisers
    Individual gifts ($100 and up)
    Miscellany
    Names and inscriptions
    National fund-raisers
    VIPs
    Volunteers
Direct mail
  Creative Mailing Consultants of America
    Correspondence, 1980-1982
BOX 104
  Invoices and fund-raising costs, 1980-1982
  Liberal appeal, 1980, undated
  List rental, 1981-1982, undated
  Proposals, 1980, undated
  Stewart, Jimmy, 1981, undated
BOX 105
  Epsilon Data Management
    Budget estimates, 1982, undated
    Correspondence, 1982-1984, undated
    Final report, 1982
    Invoices, 1981-1982
    Presentations, 1981-1982, undated
    Samples, 1981-1982, undated
  Oram Group
    Continuation and renewal mailing lists, 1980, undated
    Contractor selection, 1980, undated
    Correspondence, 1979-1981
BOX 106
  Direct mail summaries, 1983
Drafts
  Brochure, 1980, undated
  "A Memorial Day Message from Bob Hope," 1980
  Fall package, 1980
  Logo, undated
  Minutes of meetings and memoranda, 1979-1980
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Container</th>
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<td>Statistical analysis, 1980-1981</td>
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<td>Recommendations on fund-raising agencies, 1981</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 108</td>
<td>No. 5 (&quot;In memory of...&quot;)</td>
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<td>Income, 1980-1983, undated</td>
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<td>Public service announcements, 1981-1982</td>
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<td>Sources</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Correspondence, 1981-1982</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Saigon Mission, 1981-1982</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Civic and community groups
  Clubs, 1981-1982
  Correspondence, 1981-1982
  Jaycees, 1982-1983
  Police associations, 1981-1982
  Schools and colleges, 1981-1982
Corporations
  Corporate Advisory Board, 1981, undated
  Corporate brochure, 1979-1981, undated
  Corporate call instructions, 1981, undated
  Donations, 1980-1984, undated
    (3 folders)
BOX 112
IBM fund design competition, 1981, undated
Industry lists, undated
Oil companies, 1981, undated
Rejections, 1980-1982
    (3 folders)
BOX 113
Foundations
  Grants received, 1981-1983
  Minnesota foundations, cold mailing, 1981
  Proposals rejected, 1981-1982
Radiothons, 1981-1982, undated
  Alexandria, Va. (WPKX)
  Bangor, Maine (WACZ)
  Champaign, Ill. (WPGO)
  Correspondence
  Dallas/Fort Worth, Tex. (WBAP)
  Howard, Jan
BOX 114
Information kits
  Little Rock, Ark. (KLRA)
Miscellany
  Radiothons not produced
  San Antonio, Tex. (WOAI)
Special projects, 1979-1983, undated
  Benefit dinner dance
  Blue ribbon campaign
  Brass buckle
  Corcoran, Charles A.
  Correspondence
  Cypress Gardens, Fla.
  Davison, Michael S., solicitation letter
  Gifts
    "Heart of Illinois" campaign
BOX 115
Massachusetts fund raisers
  "Pass the Helmet"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Victory luncheon</td>
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<td>United Cement, Lime and Gypsum Workers, 1981, undated</td>
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<td>United Steelworkers, 1981, undated</td>
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<td>BOX 117</td>
<td>Veterans organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 118</td>
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<td>Disabled American Veterans, 1981-1982</td>
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<td>BOX 120</td>
<td>Veterans of Foreign Wars</td>
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</tbody>
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Fund-raising, 1979-1984

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<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 121</td>
<td>Volunteers, 1981-1982</td>
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</table>

BOX 121-123 Miscellany, 1966-1985

Correspondence, telephone message books, address book, notes and posters, poems and songs, memorabilia, printed matter, and plaques.
Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically thereunder.

BOX 121
Address book, undated
Memorabilia, undated
Notes, posters, and other items, 1981-1982, undated
Plaques, undated
(1 folder)

BOX 122
(1 folder)
Public letters, 1981-1985 See also Container 101, same heading
(2 folders)

BOX 123
Sayers, James E., correspondence, 1980-1982
Telephone message books, 1983-1984

BOX OV 124-OV 130 Card Files, circa 1980-circa 1984
Invitations to the National Salute to Vietnam Veterans and donor card files.
The latter are arranged alphabetically by donor group.

BOX OV 124 National Salute to Vietnam Veterans, ceremony invitations
BOX OV 125 Fund-raising, donor card files
Corporations
BOX OV 126 "In Memoria" contributions
BOX OV 127 Unions
BOX OV 128-OV 129 Veterans organizations
BOX OV 130 VIP gifts

Correspondence, transcripts, promotional material, printouts, registration labels, printed matter, and miscellaneous items concerning ceremonial tributes and various aspects of the memorial’s design.
Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically thereunder.

BOX 131 Ceremonies
1992, tenth anniversary commemoration
Miscellany
Seminars, 1992
3 May, "The War at Home, Two Perspectives"
19 May, "The Media and the Vietnam War"
12 June, "The Color of the Vietnam War"
23 June, "Women and the Vietnam War"
10 July, "The Vietnam War and Military Decision Making"
6 Nov., "A Decade at the Wall"
9 Nov., "A Day at the Archives"
Veterans Day ceremony transcript
1993, Memorial Day
Correspondence
Miscellany
Public opinion of Bill Clinton's address
  Favorable
  Mixed responses (mostly unfavorable), 1993-1994
    (3 folders)
  (4 folders)
Unfavorable
Memorial design
  Cooper-Lecky Partnership, 1982
Design competition
  Entrants
    Midwest list, 1981 See Oversize
  Registration labels, 1980
    (2 folders)
State totals, undated
Miscellany, 1980-1981
Names listed on memorial, printouts, 1980-1982 See Oversize

BOX OV 1
Oversize, 1980-1982
Oversize material consisting of printouts.
Organized and described according to the series, boxes, and folders from which the items were removed.

BOX OV 1
Addition
  Memorial design
  Design competition
  Entrants
    Midwest list, 1981 (Container 132)
  Names listed on memorial, printouts, 1980-1982 (Container 132)